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HOLDING ON TO WHO THEY ARE:

PATHWAYS FOR VARIATIONS IN RESPONSE TO TOXIC WORKPLACE BEHAVIOR AMONG U.S. INTELLIGENCE OFFICERS

A Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of
Graduate School of Leadership & Change
Antioch University

In partial fulfillment for the degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
by

Greta E. Creech
ORCID Scholar No. 0000-0001-7215-1746

May 2021

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PATHWAYS FOR VARIATIONS IN RESPONSE TO TOXIC WORKPLACE BEHAVIOR

AMONG U.S. INTELLIGENCE OFFICERS

This dissertation, by Greta E. Creech has
been approved by the committee members signed below
who recommend that it be accepted by the faculty of the
Graduate School in Leadership & Change
Antioch University
in partial fulfillment of requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Dissertation Committee:

Elizabeth Holloway, PhD, Committee Chair

Aqeel Tirmizi, PhD Committee Member

Jan Goldman, EdD Committee Member

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ABSTRACT

HOLDING ON TO WHO THEY ARE:

PATHWAYS FOR VARIATIONS IN RESPONSE TO TOXIC WORKPLACE BEHAVIOR

AMONG U.S. INTELLIGENCE OFFICERS

Greta E. Creech

Graduate School of Leadership & Change

Antioch University

Yellow Springs, OH

The U.S. intelligence community is a critical mission industry responsible for protecting lives and safety in ways that impact the global security environment. Research on the deleterious impact of toxic workplace behavior on other critical mission fields, such as health care and the U.S. military, is robust. However, intelligence scholars publishing within the unclassified arena have been silent on the phenomenon, how personnel respond to it, and how it may impact the intelligence function. This lack of scholarship has afforded an opportunity to understand what constitutes toxic behavior in the intelligence environment and how it may affect U.S. national security objectives. This study presents a theoretical model of response to toxic workplace behavior among intelligence officers in the U.S. intelligence community that centers on a single goal: *Holding Self*. Using grounded theory methodology and situational analysis in two segments, the study examines how intelligence officers responded and the role that efforts to hold onto self-concepts played in those responses. The findings included three psychological dimensions, three action dimensions, and two inter-dimensions of response. The findings also included identification of the broader ecological situation conditioning response and how those choices operationalized into the business of being intelligence officers. The final model serves

as a foundation for future empirical research on the topic. This dissertation is available in open access at AURA: Antioch University Repository and Archive, https://aura.antioch.edu/, and OhioLINK ETD Center, https://etd.ohiolink.edu/.

Keywords: toxic workplace behavior, toxic leadership, grounded theory, situational analysis, intelligence community, national security

Dedication

To the women and men of the U.S. intelligence community and their boundless courage.

Acknowledgements

I would like to begin by thanking my families (and those who know me well will understand why that word is plural). Your love, support, and encouragement have been so appreciated, even if you thought I was crazy for going back to school at this point in my life.

To Dr. Elizabeth Holloway—my chair, second-year advisor, and now my colleague and friend—thank you for your enthusiastic support, guidance, and friendship over the last few years. What you did not know was that I had chosen you for my "Yoda" even before I began Antioch simply based on your background. I knew you would be phenomenal to work with. What I never realized is how you would be able to translate me so that this tangled mess inside my brain could emerge into something coherent and contributory to the research. Most importantly, thank you for making me feel valued and understood at each step of the process.

To Dr. Aqeel Tirmizi, your expertise in the complexities of teams and relationships were invaluable to my growth early in the program. That foundation was instrumental in my ability to make sense of the dynamics I would ultimately study. Finally, thank you for your gentle demeanor and helping me to simplify my writing so that my work seemed comprehensible and relevant.

To Dr. Jan Goldman, fate is a funny thing. You served on my Master's committee all those years ago. Who knew at the time that we would end up working together again, 500 miles away, and in a completely different context? Thank you very much for agreeing to work with me again on this dissertation, your insights, and your support.

To Dr. Steve Taylor and Dr. Rosemary Taylor, thank you for your guidance and insights while I prepared Chapter 2 for this study. You both broadened my thinking and shaped my approach in significant ways. I will be forever grateful.

To Dr. Harriet Schwartz, thank you for your dedication during my ILA-B to ensure that I had the depth of knowledge in grounded theory principles and practices to support my study.

Your methods and instruction were instrumental to my success. Additionally, your encouragement when I needed it in those early days were critical.

To Dr. Philomena Essed, thank you for the encouragement and insights over the years. You are truly inspiring.

To my coding partners (alphabetically), Kelly Meehan, Dr. Beth Valicenti, and Nicole White, thank you so much for your time and attention to making this study stronger and more meaningful.

To Dr. Donna Ladkin. I was in awe of you as a scholar when we first met. I knew of and admired your work, and I was so honored to be studying under you. Over the last couple of years, I have become equally in awe of you as my close friend. Thank you so much for your support and encouragement—especially during my “dark” situational analysis phase and while you were usually sitting in a grocery store parking lot somewhere in Maine. I feel like we rode the rapids together over the last couple of years. I cannot wait to see what else is in store!

To my “posse” (alphabetically) Roz Cohen, Stacey Guenther, Dr. Amy Huntereece, Liz Paxton, and Nicole White, thank you for the cheerleading, laughs, and support over the last few years. We will move from fellow students and friends to being colleagues and friends. We will always be grounded in this experience that brought us together.

To the wider Cohort 17 family, I would not trade a moment with any of you. Thank you so much for being the greatest cohort that Antioch University has ever produced.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This dissertation examines how intelligence analysts and operations personnel (intelligence officers)[1] respond to toxic workplace behavior (TWB) and how those responses impact their function within the work environment. Scholars first adopted the term *toxic* to describe a set of counterproductive and abusive leadership behaviors in the 1990s (Whicker, 1996) when globalization, technological change, and workforce diversification began to reorient existing frameworks for power and relationships toward more systemic treatments. In this early period, researchers evaluated toxic organizational dynamics through the narrow lens of hierarchy (Ashforth, 1997; Tepper, 2000) before expanding to nonhierarchical frameworks for status and power beginning in the mid-2000s (Kusy & Holloway, 2009; Padilla et al., 2007; Pearson & Porath, 2005).

Research has demonstrated the corrosive impact of TWB organizational success, with abusive forms of power as a central component (Coccia, 1998; K. R. Williams, 2019). No identified research has challenged this finding, although research accounting for situational factors elevates ontological differences in whether and when behaviors become toxic. The TWB research landscape has touched nearly every operational framework, with a significant body of research addressing the behavior's detrimental impacts on lives and safety within health care and military environments (Felblinger, 2008; R. A. Taylor & Taylor, 2017). Thus, toxicity in organizations is not just about hurt feelings; it is about organizational failure.

[1] While the term *intelligence officer* applies to any employee of the U.S. intelligence community, the terms *intelligence analyst*, *operational personnel*, and *support roles* refer to specific categories. This study is primarily concerned with responses to TWB among analysts, operations, and their support teams. For readability, I use the term *intelligence officer* to generalize across these groups.

The U.S. intelligence community (IC) is arguably one of the most heavily examined operational frameworks in the American organizational system, with a robust library of research on the roles of history (Hitz, 2007; Troy, 1981), policy, operations, tradecraft (Fingar, 2011a; Lowenthal, 2014), and cognition on the success and failure of critical intelligence missions (Arkes & Kajdasz, 2011; Heuer, 1999). However, on the issue of TWB—or, any relational factor—and its impacts in that organizational environment, the IC has not been part of the dialogue. A review of research has identified no theory or empirical research into the impact of TWB on U.S. intelligence organizations. One cannot necessarily extrapolate impacts across industries due to the importance of industry-specific factors in measuring outcomes. However, the harm to organizations and outcomes identified in other operational environments focused on lives and safety (critical mission environments) would make findings that the behavior is not destructive to IC operations notable. Nevertheless, whether TWB among colleagues and peers has the same destructive impact on intelligence operations cannot be known until the question is asked and outside a better understanding of how personnel respond to the dynamic. Thus, my study will explore how and why intelligence officers respond to TWB in the ways that they do and how those responses might impact how they function in the operational environment.

Study Purpose

This study neither determines nor takes a position on the prevalence of TWB in the IC. Rather, the study seeks to understand how and why intelligence officers respond to TWB when it occurs and how the dynamic may impact their functioning in the operational environment. As subsequent sections will demonstrate, elements of power (formal, informal, and derived); silent and overt forms of voice; and situational factors are fundamental to toxic events. This interaction has been particularly acute in critical mission environments in which personnel must navigate ambiguous structures of power, expression, and context amid crises. While scholars have not conducted similar research on TWB in an intelligence environment, its similar critical mission

function and parallel ambiguities of power, voice, and context would make understanding the dynamic within the IC environment of interest (Creech, 2020).

This section will establish why understanding TWB in the intelligence environment is critical. The section will begin with a brief introduction to power, voice, and context in their relationship to TWB. While research on the topic in the IC is absent, its impact on the intelligence function is not entirely unknown. Thus, the section will include an example of how fear and destructive power underlying TWB contributed to intelligence failures surrounding the 1973 Yom Kippur attack on Israel. The section will close with a return to the discussion on the impact of the behavior in other critical mission environments to establish the value of understanding of the phenomenon in the IC.

Power, Voice, Context, and TWB

Theory and empirical research on TWB will be explored more deeply in Chapter 2. However, understanding TWB's connection to power, voice, and context are central to the purpose of the study. TWB is a systemic phenomenon that manifests itself in human behavior. The locus of the behavior is the power-over instead of the power-to. Scholars began to research destructive power within formal leadership in the mid-1990s and early-2000s, including toxic leadership (Lipman-Blumen, 2005a, 2005b; Whicker, 1996), petty tyranny (Ashforth, 1997), and abusive supervision (Tepper, 2000, 2007), all linking power to formal hierarchy. Concurrent with these treatments of abusive power, scholars began to explore bullying (Einarsen, 1999, 2000), mobbing (Leymann, 1990), and incivility (Andersson & Pearson, 1999) as behavioral frameworks that extended the scope of destructive power to informal status roles. This research laid an important foundation to extend the locus of Weberian power (Weber, 1968) to anyone with the ability to impose their will on others regardless of formal role.

Current research has broadened the exploratory scope beyond the study of toxic interactions between individuals into examinations of the situational factors and actors that systematize the behavior. In their study of North American leaders, Kusy and Holloway (2009)

demonstrated that the shaming, hostility, and sabotage to individuals and teams underlying the phenomenon were not reliant upon formal power and emerged into a form of toxic memory that sustained its effects even after the toxic personality was no longer physically present in the situation. Although their units of analysis remained on toxic leaders, Padilla et al. (2007) and Lipman-Blumen (2005b, 2005a) extended responsibility to enabling followers.

In his conceptualization of transformative learning theory, E. W. Taylor (2001) argued that memories serve as guides for how to respond to and live in the world. Thus, memories imprint through meaning. In his memoir, former director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation and deputy attorney general, James Comey (2018), explored the impact that memories of childhood bullying played in his dealings with adult experiences with TWB:

> I would spend a lot of time assessing threats, judging tone of voice, and figuring out the shifting dynamic in a hallway or locker room crowd. Surviving a bully requires constant learning and adaptation. It instilled in me a lifelong hatred for bullies and sympathy for their victims. (p. 37)

Both targets and witnesses to TWB gather meaning from the phenomenon, which reverberates back onto the environment through enactments of voice and silence. However, forms of voice may depend on how individuals in the phenomenon perceive their relationship to it. For instance, in his mixed methods study of students and working adults, Pelletier (2010) found that targets of TWB were more likely to respond to fear of security and safety impacts, while witnesses were more likely to notice the marginalization effects toward the target. The nature of those responses and how voice engaged depended on assessments by individuals of their positions within the toxic situation.

Responses to TWB and impacts to voice exist on an array. Targets may react through a prism of silence through fear of reprisal or loss (Tepper, 2007). Conversely, they may attempt to regain power by becoming abusive toward the toxic personality or others in the situation (Lee & Brotheridge, 2006) in a form of reactive-toxicity. How targets enact voice may also emerge from the interaction of present toxic events with memories of past experience as in the example

above, how targets perceive the toxic personality, or perceptions of how others see them as a result of being targets (Assad, 2018).

The link between TWB, power, and voice intersects through fear in interaction with a confluence of positional and situational factors. The remainder of this section will introduce the relationship between power, fear, and TWB in the intelligence environment. I will begin with a review of scholarship on intelligence failures surrounding the Yom Kippur War in 1973, to demonstrate the ways in which impacts to voice and fear from TWB traversed the personal into function and outcomes. Then, I will explore the implications of this phenomenon as an underexplored research opportunity for IC scholars.

Fear and Failure

In October 1973, Syrian and Egyptian forces executed the Yom Kippur attack across the Golan Heights and Suez Canal into Israel. Lore has framed the attack as a surprise to Israeli intelligence forces, although academic case analyses of the attack have also concluded that Israeli intelligence analysts had advance indicators of the attack (e.g., Bar-Joseph, 2005; Ben-Zvi, 1990; Chorev, 1996). In addition to these indicators of Egyptian and Syrian intent, these analyses suggest that Israel also had something else—toxicity within its analytic operations.

Although many Israeli analysts concluded that the country's adversaries had capabilities superior to standing estimates, the country's two most senior authorities on Egypt and Syria, Major General Eli Zeira (director of military intelligence) and Lieutenant Colonel Yona Bandman (Israel's lead analyst for Egyptian issues), had concluded that neither Egypt nor Syria had the air support nor the ballistic missile capability to mount an attack (Arkes & Kajdasz, 2011). Expertise can be an elixir in an environment bound by uncertainty, disagreements, and ambiguity, which are common in intelligence organizations (D. D. P. Johnson & Tierney, 2009). Thus, senior analysts and others who have reputational expertise may carry significant power to control the analytic narrative. This responsibility can foster effective critical thinking practices

and rigorous assessments when managed appropriately. However, to protect their positional influence, Zeira and Bandman abused their power through fear and the silent subjugation of dissent. According to Bar-Joseph & Kruglanski (2003):

> Both exhibited a highly authoritarian and decisive managerial style. Both lacked the patience for long and open discussions and regarded them as "bullshit." Zeira used to humiliate officers who, in his opinion, came unprepared for meetings. At least once he was heard to say that those officers who estimated in spring 1973 that a war was likely should not expect a promotion. Bandman, although less influential, . . . used to express either verbally or in body language his disrespect for the opinion of others. He was also known for his total rejection of any attempt to change a single word, even a comma, in a document he wrote. (p. 83)

Intelligence operations occur within a complexity of elements, sources, interpretations, and potentialities that unfold both temporally and spatially. Thus, establishing causality between the specific conditions, properties, and consequences of intelligence failures is problematic. However, one is not required to track destructive discourse to its origins to understand its power because the dynamic has meaning wherever it exists (Foucault, 1972). Zeira and Bandman used their reputational power as subject matter experts (SMEs) to control discourse, structure, and norms, as well as to threaten analysts who defied them by warning against attack. In short, they weaponized fear.

Their behaviors fell within standard models for TWB (Doty & Fenlason, 2013; Kusy & Holloway, 2009; Lee & Brotheridge, 2006; Lipman-Blumen, 2005b; Tepper, 2000). However, their power lay in their abilities to leverage the ambiguity, uncertainty, politicization, and complexity in the operational framework to foster a dynamic of situated essentialism. In turn, this situated essentialism enabled toxicity to infect cognitive practices, collaboration, and a willingness to speak. The result was catastrophic for Israel. Rather than leaving Israel better positioned for attack, the failure cost the country between 2,688 and 2,838 lives in 20 days (Warshal, 2009).

Most striking about the above analyses of the Yom Kippur attack is the focus on cognitive breakdowns as the fundamental cause of the failure rather than the behavior affecting

cognitive processes. Bar-Joseph and colleagues (Bar-Joseph, 2005; Bar-Joseph & Kruglanski, 2003; Bar-Joseph & McDermott, 2010), as well as Chorev (1996), have reached similar conclusions that the missed cues, the failure to connect relationships between elements of the data, and the failure to consider alternative assessments were instrumental to the outcome. While they recognize the roles played by fear and destructive power in diminishing voice, they center the locus of their explorations on the cognitive failures, per se, rather than on the relational failures underlying those cognitive deficiencies. Thus, they address TWB as a tangential factor, but without a deep exploration of the factorial weight that the behaviors may have had on overall operations.

Research Opportunity

The health care, U.S. military, and intelligence fields have significant similarities. They foster and protect human lives, operate in unpredictable crisis environments (Antai-Otong, 2001; Reed, 2015; Roter, 2011), and function amid significant psychological stress, moral distress, and ambiguity (Betts, 2007; Kortje, 2016; Mastroianni, 2011). As already noted, research indicates significantly deleterious effects from TWB in health care and military environments (Coccia, 1998; Dagless, 2018; Holloway & Kusy, 2010; The Joint Commission, 2008; Reed, 2015), making a similar understanding of the phenomenon in intelligence critical. However, no identified studies have explored TWB in the IC. Rather, as with the Yom Kippur example above, analyses of intelligence failures skim across the surface of operational breakdowns, exploring the roles of cognitive closure (Heuer, 1999), poor collaboration, structure (9/11 Commission, 2004), competitive intelligence (Davies, 2004), and uncertainty (J. Davis, 2003b) without questioning the role of underlying behavioral factors in success and failure.

The reasons for the absence of research into the phenomenon in the IC are unclear. However, this research opportunity may stem from a broader minimalism related to research on the human dynamic in the intelligence space. A review of literature reveals only minimal scholarship on IC culture and relational dynamics, much of it produced by outside scholarship

(e.g., Aldrich & Kasuku, 2012; Bean, 2014, 2009a, 2012; Callum, 2001; Nolan, 2013, 2018). As of this writing in March 2021, the CIA's Center for the Study of Intelligence online archive shows no scholarship on the impact of relationships on intelligence outcomes beyond promoting broader collaboration and sharing (*Operations Subject Index—Central Intelligence Agency*, 2019). The Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) regularly reports progress on goals ranging from diversity and inclusion to ethics; however, the ODNI publishes no analyses of how relational phenomena may impact those issues (*Office of the Director of Intelligence--How We Work*, 2019). The Defense Intelligence Agency's (DIA) "Director's Reading List" for 2020 recommends 189 books. Of the 58 on "Leadership and Development," only one deals directly with group or relational dynamics, Coyle's (2018) group dynamic theory on the "culture code." Major (2014) has produced two comprehensive editions on communicating intelligence findings effectively; however, neither discusses how to manage a toxic communication environment. Intelligence is a decidedly relational endeavor, with individuals and teams involved throughout the intelligence process from collection to final production. As this study will demonstrate, TWB is fundamentally a relational dynamic. Thus, understanding how relational factors, particularly those that negatively affect collaboration and team functioning, may impact those processes would be significant.

Research Question and Methodological Approach

This section explores my research focus and the methodological approach used in the study. I will begin the section with an explanation of my research question and its relevance to my study population, the challenges encountered in identifying moments of response and change, and the ontological challenges associated with understanding the phenomenon through participant meaning. Although Chapter 3 includes an in-depth discussion of the study's methodological approach and design, this section will conclude with a brief explanation of both and their suitability for the research question.

Research Question

Grounded theorists term sensitizing concepts as those assumptions and beliefs about the phenomenon that may drive their research (Blumer, 1969; Kelle, 2007). I began this study with an interest in how intelligence officers responded to TWB among colleagues and peers based on a sensitizing concept that intelligence officers would respond differently to TWB among peers and colleagues than among formal leaders. My initial research question reflected this interest. However, a theoretical direction emerged relatively early in the study that led me to abandon the focus on peer relationships as a critical element and look more closely at other factors that might influence response. This new direction changed my research question to the following:

> How do intelligence officers respond to TWB, what influences differences in those responses individually and longitudinally, and what are the impacts of those responses to how they function as professionals in the operational environment?

The question required that I traverse a complex dynamic of individual meaning. For example, a theoretical model of this phenomenon would require that I understand individual responses in interaction with ambiguous micro-, meso-, and macro-conditions within an environment framed by paradoxical requirements for collaboration, competition, secrecy, and trust (Busch & Weissman, 2005). The question also confronted ontological challenges on the nature of toxicity in an intelligence environment. How did intelligence analysts and operations personnel recognize TWB in an environment of significant stress, uncertainty, ambiguity, and risk? How did they make meaning of the dynamic among coworkers, colleagues, managers, and senior leaders? What were the relationships between TWB and how intelligence officers exercised voice to collaborate, innovate, and challenge disagreements? In other words, where did toxic relationships and tradecraft intersect to impact the quality of produced intelligence?

Responses to ongoing events are not static (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Thus, the question relied upon being able to identify junction points in which responses and impacts changed, along with what contributed to the change. What was the scope of responses to TWB in that

operational environment? What conditioned them? What elements of the analyst's "situation" influenced response and choices? What triggered the transitions between responses?

Methodological Approach

The theoretical model to be discussed in Chapter 6 is the key outcome of this study. The purpose of a theoretical model is to develop an empirically based framework to guide effective measurement decisions within future research (Torraco, 1997). Without a foundational model, crafting future research decisions on which variables and relationships to measure, which methodologies to use, and how to design the structure of the research would be tantamount to navigating without a compass. Thus, by developing a theory grounded in a study of intelligence officers, my research did not address every aspect of this research opportunity but began constructing a path for doing so.

Theory and methods cannot be separated (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). My research question required a methodology robust enough to surface individual meaning within a complex environment, identify moments of change within that system of meaning, track them temporally, link meaning to function, and understand the role of context in shaping both meaning and function. Further, the method of inquiry encountered a relatively uncultivated field in which TWB has not been empirically explored. To manage this complex research environment, I chose two related methodologies: grounded theory methodology and situational analysis.

Grounded theory is a qualitative method of inquiry that uses rigorous collection and sampling methods to understand a social process through participant meaning of a phenomenon (Holloway & Schwartz, 2018). Unlike quantitative methods, in which sampling decisions are made prior to the initiation of the study, sampling choices in grounded theory are ongoing, flexible, and adaptable as dimensions and themes emerge (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Thus, emergent processes of coding and analysis that become more complex and abstract over the course of the study continue until no new dimensions and themes emerge (saturation).

Then, the researcher constructs a theoretical model of that social process (Birks & Mills, 2015; Charmaz, 2014).

Grounded theory requires researchers to be reflexive about their sensitizing concepts. I began the study with a sensitizing concept that situational complexity shaped response and action within it. Charmaz (2000), who founded the constructivist school of grounded theory,[2] argued that the methodology assumes the discovery of a participant's reality as it interacts with cultural, temporal, and structural elements. However, grounded theory is not designed to map the broader contextual frame (Glaser & Holton, 2004). To document and analyze situational factors, I used situational analysis, a methodological tool linked to grounded theory's pragmatist school, to map the various social, relational, and situational elements (Clarke, 2003, 2005) that influenced responses. Although situational analysis was not designed specifically for model development (Clarke, 2012), the methodology added more depth to that model.

Researcher Positionality

Qualitative research proposals commonly place a section on researcher positionality toward the end of the document after the foundational concepts have been discussed. However, my research goals, my professional history in which I have held both formal and referential power, my experiences as an intelligence officer, and my individuality cannot be separated from the epistemological and ontological assumptions in the study. These paths framed sensitizing concepts I brought to the study and what I believed to be relevant. They are also integrated into the intellectual mix through which I conceptualized and designed the study. A similar set of sensitizing concepts among readers will govern how they interpret the study's assumptions and findings, their assessments of its trustworthiness, and how useful they find the results. Thus, I have placed this positionality section toward the front of this chapter because understanding my own position at the outset may provide context for the remainder of the chapter.

[2] A discussion of the various schools within grounded theory methodology will appear in Chapter 3.

My early career introduced me to TWB, although I recognized the phenomenon as the normal state of operations rather than toxic. Prior to joining the IC, I had a career in national politics, which tapped my desire for a larger mission and leveraged my youthful enjoyment of adrenalin-infused crisis environments. However, survival in that work environment came with a price. In Washington politics, political "tribes" defined my relationships, allegiances, adversaries, and work identity. Thus, in the all-consuming routine 16-hour days, boundaries between my work and personal identity, as well as colleagues and personal friends, were porous.

Research indicates that marginalizing others into in and out groups is a common element of TWB (Ciuk, 2011; Pelletier, 2010), with the effects remaining acute regardless of whether those in the environment recognize the behavior as toxic (R. A. Taylor, 2016). To lose one's tribe, as I did in the early 1990s, when a politician for whom I worked thought his five-point victory was not large enough, resulted in a toxic form of marginalization that affected every element of my life. Thus, although I framed the events as merely the cost of doing business in Washington politics rather than "toxic," the detrimental impact to my relationships, identity, and practice sustained long after memories of the specific event began to fade.

I moved from politics into national security roles, first as an aide to the director of a federal agency. He was all charisma, vision, vigor, and plans. Every day working for him was defined by unfettered hope and discovery. He also ruled by hammer, with major transgressions and small slights carrying the same risk that one would be marginalized. Research has identified multiple permutations of toxic enablers (further discussed in Chapter 2) as contributors to the phenomenon's systematization, even when well-meaning (Kusy & Holloway, 2009; Padilla et al., 2007). I was never his target; rather, I attempted to use the status that I derived by my position with him to act as a buffer between his toxic leadership and his targets (Follett, 1924). However, while my intent was to protect others, my efforts enabled the phenomenon by also shielding him from accountability.

As I will discuss in depth later in this chapter, TWB is fundamentally about power (Pearson & Porath, 2005) as an omnipresent and multifaceted element that everyone in the dynamic—including targets—use to gain and hold advantage. However, even when power is not the intent, the behavior can be catastrophic for organizational climates, placing even nonhierarchical relationships within a shifting power dynamic as toxic personalities, targets, and others in the dynamic battle for position (Yamada, 2000). This toxic positioning reveals itself in overt and passive behaviors to capture and/or recapture position when organizational support is ineffective or nonexistent (Kusy & Holloway, 2009; Lee & Brotheridge, 2006; Li et al., 2016; Rayner et al., 1999).

I joined the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA) in 2001 as a GEOINT analyst. My transition to the IC introduced me to this complex relationship between TWB and power through two other permutations, the roles of peer-to-peer TWB and reactive-toxicity. As I grew as an analyst and power differentials changed, I experienced passive forms of TWB in the form of extreme micro-management and marginalization by one coworker and overt bullying by one of their allies. However, my route of response to the behavior was long and uneven, transitioning through placating, resistance, and immobilization. After a long and unsuccessful period of trying to engage leadership support, I parlayed my perceived isolation into reactive-toxicity as a means of survival. I finally departed the team when I realized I was becoming something unrecognizable even to myself.

In her study of health care teams, R. A. Taylor (2016) found that each person in the toxic dynamic is both empowered and victimized in unique ways. I observed in those instances that individuals engaged in their own trajectories of response. I have conducted this study as an effort to understand the antecedents and temporal nature of responses to TWB among intelligence officers, how they translate into action, how they are conditioned and dimensioned, and what their consequences are. I have also sought to understand how the unique IC

"situation" is constitutive of how responses flow back into the system as new sets of conditions (Corbin & Strauss, 1996) to normalize toxicity.

Research Environment

In her description of situational analysis, Clarke (2003, 2005, 2007) rejected the concept of "context" because the term implies an entity surrounded by a set of events and the individuals experiencing them. Rather, she adopted the term "situation" to describe a set of elements that exists around, within, and coterminous to its elements. Thus, a phenomenon does not exist within a context; rather, they are constitutive of each other. Whichever term one prefers, the idea of a situation in which analysts develop individual meaning through a collective social space (Baszanger & Dodier, 1997) framed by structure, power, ambiguity, and uncertainty fits. TWB, as a phenomenon that defines relationships through destructive use of power and voice, is constitutive of the broader social dynamic while also shaping that environment. To understand whether TWB exists in the IC situation, one must first define the situation.

Popular culture is a safe place for intelligence officers. Jack Ryan always gets the submarine, and Carrie Mathison always gets her terrorist. Analysts and operational personnel do live at the proverbial "tip of the spear." They confront intractable problems on a global scale, in real time, and often at great risk. They must often navigate significant ambiguity and data unreliability to produce expert analysis in support of policymaker questions, which routinely demand more certainty than available intelligence provides (Betts, 2007; J. Davis, 2003a, 2003b). The work is not ordinary, and few ordinary people work there. However, as a former senior intelligence official once remarked to me, "I asked for analysts. God gave me people" (anonymous, personal communication, 2007). Thus, they function in an environment in which scientific approaches to problem-solving are prized, but one in which power, institutions, relationships, and situational factors shape outcomes.

The IC is a hydra that began as a single entity when the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) was established in 1947 as the country's first civilian intelligence agency (National

Security Act, 1947). Prior to the CIA's establishment, the World War II-era Office of Strategic Services (OSS), and the U.S. Army and U.S. Navy's military intelligence activities conducted intelligence collection and analysis within clandestine operations. Civilian intelligence became a "community" in 1955, when President Dwight Eisenhower designated the Director of the CIA in a dual role with the director of central intelligence and as the first-among-equals among other intelligence chiefs (U.S. Department of State, 1955).[3]

Since the IC became a "community, the environment has expanded to 18 entities (ODNI, 2021) around specializations that use specific tools, methods, and tradecraft (Hammond, 2007). A description of each entity can be found at Appendix B. The so-called "Big Six" of CIA, NGA, NSA, NRO, FBI, and DIA contain 81.6% of the IC workforce (*Annual Demographic Report,* 2018). Intelligence is defined as information gathered outside of the U.S. related to its property, interests, or people; weapons of mass destruction; or "any matter bearing on the interests of the U.S." (*What Is Intelligence?*, 2019). As the IC's fundamental service line, intelligence analysis evaluates, integrates, and analyzes data to provide insight into the situatedness of foreign strategic postures, foreign leader psychological frames, and policy intensions (Fingar, 2011a).

Ten IC agencies fall under the administrative control of the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD),[4] with the remainder under independent administration (*Members of the IC*, 2021). Reforms after the September 11, 2001 (9/11) attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon sought to strengthen cohesion and oversight within the IC by eliminating the DCI and creating an independent director of national intelligence (DNI; Intelligence Reform and Terrorism

[3] Prior to the establishment of the Director of National Intelligence in 2004 as part of the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004, the Director of the CIA also served in the role of the Director of Central Intelligence (DCI). Established by the National Security Act of 1947, the DCI role was designed to be the chief advisor to the U.S. president on intelligence programs and policy, as well as the coordinating mechanism for intelligence among the various IC agencies (Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act, 2004; National Security Act, 1947).

[4] The following IC entities fall under the administrative control of DoD: NGA, NSA/CSS, NRO, DIA, ONI, the intelligence units of the U.S. Air Force, U.S. Army, U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. Marine Corps, U.S. Space Force.

Prevention Act of 2004). Reforms gave the DNI power to establish objectives but little control over the administrative and budgetary operations to execute them. Thus, while the DNI has significant authority over intelligence requirements, approximately 80% of the IC's budget authority resides within the agencies reporting to DoD (L. K. Johnson, 2015; Lowenthal, 2014).

While external to the IC in structure, political prerogatives and the U.S. election cycle intrude on the analytic process through Congressional oversight and the demands of national policymakers within the executive branch. At its extreme, overt political pressure for specific intelligence outcomes may cast doubt on the intelligence process, both shaping and reactive to public opinion on politically charged issues (J. Davis, 2003a). Allied partners, who must navigate their own layers of complexity, participate in intelligence production but are subject to their own segmented compartmentalization in access to U.S. intelligence. They have equity in U.S. intelligence outcomes, even in those circumstances in which they do not have access. This impact without voice relegates them to implicated and silenced actors (Clarke, 1991) in the intelligence dynamic. Surrounding the ecological landscape are unanticipated and/or inevitable geopolitical events that may reshape the intelligence environment in real time.

The complexity and ambiguity within the IC ecology privilege intelligence officers who embody the political acumen to maneuver within them. They operate within a paradigm of "INTs"—HUMINT (human intelligence), SIGINT (signals intelligence), GEOINT (geospatial intelligence), MASINT (measurement and signature intelligence), and OSINT (open-source). Each requires specialized collection methods and skills to interpret, analyze, and integrate them into final intelligence products. Tradecraft and scope elevate technology as a nonhuman actant in this ecological space (Latour, 1996), giving power to those who can traverse its complexities but also mediating voice when relationships are transmitted through virtuality.

Each INT is also managed by its own agency-level framework within an array of inter- and intra-agency directorates, occupations, and intelligence requirements. While agencies have functional leadership for a specific capability, intelligence officers specializing in those

collection methods may be in multiple organizations throughout the IC (*Members of the IC*, 2021), each with their own specialized language, discourse, and cultural practices (Nolan, 2013). Thus, team members must contend with complex layers of meso- and micro-cultures (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), modes of expression and representation (Goffman, 1959), loci of power (Maras, 2017), and discursive norms (Bean, 2012).

This diffused nature of analysis and operations—even within single agencies—challenged relationships and my ability to assess toxic events within them. While qualitative research often produces findings that inform research in other contexts (Ospina & Dodge, 2005), generalizability gives way to situated meaning as a goal. Nevertheless, understanding the nature of TWB within analytical and operational contexts benefited from the perspective of participants in disparate areas of the IC. Finding participants with rich data to share in such a dispersed population was complex and iterative. However, the challenges of finding participants paled in comparison to the complexities of being able to identify junction points of response and change (Glaser, 1978) in their stories. To identify these transitions required that I distinguish between the interpersonal and the diffused micro- and meso-cultural arenas influencing them (Strauss, 1978). I also had to identify the nodes in which single toxic events became structural (Uhl-Bien et al., 2007).

The diverse mission specialization of IC entities is intended to ensure that key intelligence issues benefit from a diversity of mental models, technical tools, and sources so that policymakers can make the best decisions with what is known in the moment (Callum, 2001)—or, in the words of one of my participants, to give policymakers the “space to make decisions” (Gwen). However, specialization also impedes the development of a community-wide analytic identity and challenges an ability to rigorously identify discrete elements in the situation. For example, Fingar (2011a) segments the analytic role into the following requirements: provide warning, monitor targets and look for new ones, develop analytical products, participate in developing IC production plans, collaborate with other analysts, and guide collectors. However,

even this occupational perspective fails to capture the cultural and functional differences between HUMINT analysts who are relationally and physically separated from collectors, and SIGINT or GEOINT analysts who routinely engage with their collection systems (Schum, 1987).

The complexity reaches down into the subsystem level, where macro- and meso-environments converge. For example, an unclassified recruiting site for IC entities details 49 occupations within 18 separate career fields within the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA), alone ("NGA Careers" 2019). NGA is the functional manager for GEOINT. However, while most positions fall under the management of NGA, GEOINT exists within a National System for Geospatial Intelligence (NSGI). According to a 2015 review, the NSGI is composed of 17 organizations, including 13 IC entities, the Office of the Undersecretary of Defense for Intelligence, the Office of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the various U.S. military service intelligence agencies, and the U.S. military commands. Additionally, six interagency committees are associate members, along with the Allied System for Geospatial Intelligence (ASG) composed of the U.S., Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand as "Five Eye" allied partners. The addition of the U.S. Space Force as an eighteenth IC entity in January 2021 may have changed this configuration. However, I was unable to confirm this change by the time of this publication (*National System for Geospatial Intelligence*, 2015).

While intelligence officers become situated into the normative, discursive, and functional cultures of their home agencies, they must navigate the unique terrain of partner engagement rules. These engagement rules can be marginalizing in such a fluid operational environment. While each entity within the IC serves the overarching mission to enable a "stronger, safer nation" (*Intelligence Community Mission*, 2019), each also has a unique core, structure, and micro-culture (Vaughan, 2003). Opportunities for unproductive relational conflict (Jehn, 1995, 1997) at the micro-level can metastasize into a system-wide phenomenon when multiple practices, vantage points, cultures, and methods collide on one critical intelligence issue.

Thus, understanding the nature, responses to, and functionalization of TWB among intelligence analysts and operations personnel cannot be divorced from an understanding of their unique environments. However, viewed through the prism of Clarke's (2005, 2015) conceptualization of the phenomenon and its situation as co-constitutive, there is no central analytic or operational context. Rather, there is an analytic situation, consisting of individualized (e.g., social, familial, and professional), micro-processual, and fluid elements factoring into choice and response. This array flows back into the system as a set of conditions for future responses and action (Clarke & Star, 2008). To understand responses to TWB among intelligence officers, I first had to identify these elements, including how they mediated power and voice. The epistemological and ontological underpinnings of these concepts will be explored in Chapter 2, as well as relevant sections on methodology and design in Chapter 3.

Research Design

As noted, my study explores how intelligence analysts and operational personnel respond to TWB and how the behavior affects their functioning in the work environment. This question required a methodological design to track responses over time, transition points between responses, and why those shifts occurred within a complex dynamic of individual and situational elements. I also needed to develop a theoretical model of response to TWB to guide future research. Thus, my methodological choice had to be able to manage this complexity. My design combined grounded theory and situational analysis. For the purposes of this section, I will provide a summary of each and how they were appropriate to explore my research question.

Grounded Theory Methodology

Grounded theory methodology is a rigorous qualitative method that begins inductively, then moves through emerging processes of deduction and abduction to develop a theory of meaning and action grounded in the data (Reichertz, 2007). With epistemological foundations in Dewey (1909) and Mead’s (1934) treatment of the “self,” as well as Blumer’s (1969) symbolic interactionism, the methodology is designed to assist researchers in surfacing individual

meaning within complex situations. Grounded theory's ultimate purpose is to develop a theoretical model grounded in rigorous data collection and analysis as a foundation for future research, not merely to describe meaning (Stern, 1994). The grounded theory portion of my study relied predominantly on semi-structured interviews with current and former members of analytical and operational intelligence officers. Data collection and analysis transitioned through multiple, emergent rounds, each driving the research toward greater levels of abstraction until a theoretical model of the phenomenon emerged.

Depending on the research question and their epistemological perspectives, grounded theorists may combine participant interviews and other data modalities or just rely upon interviews alone (Charmaz, 1990). However, the "why" within my research question arrived loaded with a series of interacting individual and ecological elements influencing participant meaning and response. While grounded theory surfaced some elements of the situation within the participant's perspectival "field of view," overt and tacit forms of power, as well as forms of voice among actors in the dynamic impacted toxic events. Thus, interviews lent a partiality to the data. I used situational analysis as a companion to grounded theory to identify and analyze these elements.

Situational Analysis

I adopted situational analysis as a companion to grounded theory to develop a data-driven understanding of the larger environment constitutive of the phenomenon. Based on the root metaphors of Blumer's (1969) symbolic interactionism, Foucault's (1972, 1980, 2002) theories of power and discourse, and Strauss's (1978) Social Worlds Arenas Theory (SWAT), situational analysis extends grounded theory (Clarke, 2012) to understand complexities through analyses of ethnographic, discourse, and historical datasets. Data modalities typically include documentation, personal communications, images, music, and any forms that the researcher finds endemic, and thus constitutive, of the situation. From this analysis, the researcher

develops a series of maps representing the broader situation. Analyses often include, but are not limited to, varieties of situational, relational, project, and positional maps (Clarke, 2003).

Researchers commonly combine grounded theory and situational analysis, although one may be dominant. Grounded theory, in particular, requires researchers to minimize (as much as possible) preexisting assumptions about where the research may lead so that modeling remains emergent from the data and not dominated by sensitizing concepts (Charmaz, 2008; Glaser, 1978). Although situational analysis permits researchers to develop design-phase situational maps as a check on preconceived assumptions at the start of data collection (Clarke, 2005; Clarke et al., 2017), that methodology also emphasizes allowing the data to drive mapping choices and design. Therefore, while I began my study under the assumption that both methodologies would carry equal weight, data analysis elevated grounded theory as slightly dominant in answering the research question.

Scope and Framework

This dissertation is published in unclassified channels. This decision is based on two considerations. One, I departed the IC in 2013, no longer carry a security clearance, and do not have access to classified publishing channels. Second, I believe that academic research must venture outside of industry-bounded and academic bubbles by designing and publishing research so that it has the largest possible impact on practice. Otherwise, the usefulness of the research is limited to the intellectual echo chamber and diminishes its value to those who could most benefit. Publishing my research in unclassified channels not only makes the findings available to members of the IC but to researchers in other disciplines.

Similarly, relevance and impact required that I gather my analysis into some discernable form, while allowing me to understand TWB within a situation residing in an operational environment. Thus, I have limited data collection on intelligence officers who identify as analysts, operational personnel, and those who directly support analysis. Limiting my scope to this social world has maintained the locus of my research on personnel who are most closely

tied to providing strategic warning, informing policymaker decisions, and shaping the decision-making of allied partners—the IC's core mission. Conversely, the situational analysis portion of the data collection was wide in scope, including, but not limited to, historical renderings of intelligence events (successes and failures), memoirs, case studies, analyses of the intelligence environment, and primary and in situ documentation.

Some limitations on data collection shaped the outset of this study. I relinquished my security clearance when I departed the IC in 2013. Thus, any relevant classified data was not available to me. Additionally, the grounded theory portion of the data collection relied primarily upon participant interviews. Even when participants were discussing ongoing toxic events in their situations, those renderings were memories by the time they reached me. Thus, I did not observe TWB in the analytic environment in real time. However, this boundary was only in access. Because my research question was focused on individual meaning, any observations I might have gained in a field experiment would not have added to that question in a material way. In other words, their responses were outcomes of their meaning, not my observations of their meaning. Additionally, I triangulated participant meaning using multiple sources through the situational analysis phase of the research.

Chapter Outline

This section provides a brief overview of the dissertation's structure. The first five chapters are the introduction, literature review, methodological design, and research findings. Chapter 6 will explore the theoretical model and propositions to support future research. This chapter will also include a brief section to discuss implications for leading change in practice for the IC. Each chapter is discussed below.

Chapter 1—Introduction

Chapter 1 has established my study purpose and the research question within the framework of relevant epistemological and theoretical constructs. I have intentionally limited discussions on the nature and impact of TWB, as well as ecological discussions related to the

intelligence “situation” to ground the epistemological and methodological discussions. However, scholars have produced a significant body of literature on TWB, as well as on IC mission, operations, failures, and successes. That review appears in Chapter 2.

Chapter 2—Literature Review

Chapter 2 is divided into three sections:

Section 1 includes an expanded discussion of power and voice. Although I have devoted most of the chapter to discussions of theory and research on TWB, permutations of power and voice are fundamental to the behavior and the environment that emerges from it. Additionally, power and voice figure heavily in the meaning inherent in grounded theory studies, particularly in the participant/interviewer relationship (Collins, 1998; Kvale & Brinkman, 2009; Stephens, 2007). Continuums of power and voice are also foundational concepts within situational analysis (Clarke, 2005, 2015). Thus, understanding the role of power and voice links TWB and my methodological design.

Section 2 explores current theoretical models and empirical research on TWB. I begin the chapter with a discussion and comparison of related constructs, such as abusive supervision, bullying, and incivility before exploring toxicity in workplaces. The section on TWB includes relevant literature on toxicity within hierarchical and nonhierarchical power frameworks, responses, the nature of and supporting elements within the toxic system, and the role of the situation.

Section 3 explores theoretical models and empirical research on the intelligence community. The scope of this research is limited to what is available in unclassified channels. Because the elements of ambiguity, uncertainty, and binary bottom-line environments are known situational contributors to TWB in other contexts and are also inherent artifacts of the IC operational framework, I have structured this section to explore the IC situation through these subtopics.

Chapter 3—Methodology and Design

Chapter 3 discusses the purpose and applicability of the methodological choices underlying the study in greater depth than has occurred in this chapter. Because my methodological design has included two related approaches, each is explored separately, with relationships between the two integrated where appropriate. The chapter consists of two sections.

Section 1 examines the nature and applicability of grounded theory and situational analysis to my study. The section begins with a discussion of grounded theory's epistemological and ontological underpinnings, its developmental journey, and its methodological fit with my research. The preponderance of this first section engages with grounded theory's main concepts, including sampling and saturation; coding and analysis; memoing; constant comparison; and theoretical sensitivity.

The section concludes with a discussion of situational analysis. Blumer's (1969) theories of symbolic interactionism, Foucault's (1972, 1980, 1990) on power through discourse and voice, and Strauss's (1987) SWAT are foundations (root metaphors) for situational analysis. Thus, I briefly reintroduce these constructs as an entry point for a more in-depth discussion of the methodology. Because I used that methodology as a framework to analyze the situational aspects of intelligence officers in toxic events, I follow with a brief description of the tool before exploring the methodology's reconceptualization of context as "the situation."

The second section in Chapter 3 explores my study's design. The section includes a reintroduction of the research question as a foundation for how I integrated grounded theory and situational analysis. I also explore my choice of study participants and the challenges associated with studying intelligence officers as a collective; how data was collected; how I conducted the analysis; and ethical considerations.

Chapter 4—Findings for Grounded Theory Segment

While grounded theory and situational analysis will be integrated in chapter 6, the findings for each segment are in separate chapters to facilitate the reader's understanding of the model. This chapter explores the findings of the grounded theory portion of the study through the words and insights of 20 intelligence officers who participated in the study. The focus of the chapter will be eight dimensions of *Holding Self* as trajectories of response to TWB in the intelligence environment: three primary psychological dimensions and their properties; three primary action dimensions, along with their conditions, processes, and consequences; and two interim dimensions of action with their conditions and processes. These findings form the foundation of the theoretical model.

Chapter 5—Findings for Situational Analysis Segment

Chapter 5 reviews the findings of the situational analysis segment of the study. The chapter focuses on identifying cartographically the elements of the intelligence situation that are relevant to choices of response to TWB. Maps were constructed using multimodal data collection processes designed to surface the various actors, actants, collectives, discourses, and structures at play in the phenomenon. These maps will be integrated into the theoretical model.

Chapter 6—Implications for Leading Change and Future Research

This chapter explores the theoretical model emerging from the study. The model and its discussion reflect an integration of the grounded theory and situational analysis findings. Following the model discussion, the chapter provides five propositions to support future research. Finally, the chapter discusses the implications of the study's findings for leading change within IC analytic and operational teams.

Summary

This chapter has established the purpose, theoretical foundation, and research problem supporting my research question of how and why U.S. intelligence officers respond in different

ways to TWB. Power, ambiguity, uncertainty, and bottom-line environments are inherent in the intelligence environment. Research in other contexts has demonstrated that these elements are related to toxicity within organizational systems without effective mechanisms to maintain healthy relationships—or worse, systems that embody elements that actively promote TWB. However, no body of literature has integrated these ecological artifacts into a study of how they may or may not relate to TWB in the IC, or even if TWB exists within the IC. The following chapter will explore these conditions and their relationships to TWB as identified in extant research.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The challenge of any literature review is striking a balance between comprehensiveness and parsimony. Grounded theory studies also have challenges associated with debates over when to conduct a literature review—before data collection, emergent with the data, or after data collection is complete and an overarching theory has emerged—as well as how far afield to venture in choosing which existing theories to engage (Charmaz, 1990; Glaser, 1998). Even absent a deep dive into extant theory, careers and other life experiences create knowledge and assumptions that form the theoretical foundations for the choices researchers make about their fields of study. Blumer (1954, 1969) described these assumptions as sensitizing concepts, arguing that they function as tools enabling us to make sense of the world. Thus, without some understanding of extant theory underlying main themes in the literature, a researcher can be so theoretically unmoored that the research becomes unnavigated. Conversely, grounding oneself too tightly to existing theory may leave that same researcher anchored to irrelevant concepts that do not inform theoretical growth.

I have framed my literature review in this chapter around three sensitizing concepts based on foundational theory and research on TWB and the IC:

- Power, its impact on voice, and situational factors that enable TWB in other industries likely also enable the phenomenon in an intelligence environment.
- The unanticipated risks to life and safety with which unaddressed TWB has been associated in other critical mission environments may pose similar threats in the intelligence environment.
- Prevailing literature indicating that contextual or situational factors are formative of toxic events and their impacts in other industries suggests that similar relationships may exist between those elements and TWB in the IC.

I have structured the literature review into three sections. First, I explore foundational and current theories on power and voice. These topics will surface again in tailored form in

Chapter 3 when I review the “root metaphors” (Clarke, 2003, 2005) or foundational theories supporting situational analysis. Second, I leverage treatments of power and voice in a discussion of extant theory and relevant research on TWB. This section include a brief overview of related constructs of counterproductive behavior for comparison. The final section is a discussion of unclassified theory and research on the intelligence environment with particular emphasis on the roles of ambiguity, uncertainty, and collaboration versus competition.

Power

In his earlier writings, Foucault (1965, 1972) linked power to discourse and its representation in voice. However, his thinking evolved over time, not abandoning the importance of discourse, but in reconceptualizing power as inhabiting every relationship, vocal frame, and structure (Foucault,1980). Researching critical theories and empirical research on power carries the same complexity, a sense that power is everywhere, infused in multiple constructs either directly or grounded tacitly in the relational or structural implications for that concept. Thus, where to begin a discussion of power and what to include can be a challenge unless the discussion is confined by a distinct set of relationships in its impact.

Although I introduced the significance of power and voice to TWB in Chapter 1, the following section will engage these concepts more deeply. The section begins with a discussion of the major ontologies of power, followed by an exploration of micro-politics as the structural catalyst for power through discourse. The final section reintroduces power and voice, focusing on literature related to who holds the power of discourse but also the role of silence as a form of voice. These themes will reemerge in the discussions of TWB and the intelligence situation.

Ontologies of Power

Ontologies of power place the construct on a continuum of traditional forms established through hierarchy, history, and structure at one end, and relationally atmospheric phenomena at the other. Defining power as the ability to influence concomitant with psychological change, French and Raven (1959) identified five loci of power in coercion, reward, legitimacy, expertise,

and reference. However, each is contingent upon the perception of others in the system and distinctions between them may be ambiguous. Thus, power may be positional, relational, or some integration of the two (Jeffrey Pfeffer, 1993).

Power both enables and limits agency. In its coercive form, Weber (1968) defined power as a bilateral relationship in which one imposes her will on another through hierarchical, legal, or charismatic means. Traditional power limits agency within the confines of rules, structures, and the fear of sanction. Charismatic power as a form of relational power infantilizes by creating a false dependency between the one holding the power and the subject (Bion, 1961). However, charismatic power breaks down an arbitrary distinction between coercive power and power as a form of influence (Raven, 1964). Both traditional and charismatic power require subjugation, either through structure (legitimate) or perceived power imbalances (relational). Charismatic power survives by promoting a false narrative, not only related to its own agency, but also about the lack of agency by the subjugated. Even when the source of relationally based charismatic power also holds legitimate power, subjects become complicit in building and promulgating the very structures, discourses, and norms that maintain their own subjugation (Emerson, 1962). In this way, power is self-perpetuating.

A separate set of constructs frames power as relationally interactive. Framed within ontologies of leadership, power to lead is not embodied in a person but in a collaborative emergence between people, regardless of whether the relationship is hierarchical or non-status (Bradbury & Lichtenstein, 2000; Drath, 2001; Uhl-Bien et al., 2007). Thus, the meaning derived in this collaborative space fosters the emergence of rules and values (Giddens, 1991), as well as asymmetric forms of reputation, networks, access to information, symbolic representations, and the power to influence (Bolman & Deal, 2017). Thus, even within this collaborative power to drive change, power imbalances from outsized social status and outsized abilities to influence outcomes are inherent elements of the collaboration. However, as with more traditional sources of power, both parties participate in sustaining it.

A final set of constructs strips power away from individuals into an emerging phenomenon of structures, relationships, institutions, discourses, and norms. Foucault (1980) figures heavily here in his definition of power as omnipresent and inescapable: “Power is always already there. You are not inside it or outside it. It is out, in, and through” (p. 141). Thus, individuals do not have power. They share space within in it, with even those who are subjugated to it able to assert power situationally through fluid, relational, and emergent interactions (Blau, 1964).

Power becomes insidious within this dynamic. The locus of power embeds itself through tacit structures, routine practices, and the emergence of dominant individuals as its symbol (Foucault, 2002). Collectives, as symbols of the dominant frame, develop and legitimize the existence of others by controlling resources and membership (Strauss, 1982). The competition for domination over resources and opportunities situates tacit forms of structure and discourse, fostering its perpetuation (Clarke, 2005). However, a systemic locus of power is agnostic and ontologically neutral. Even this form of power may cultivate a landscape in which healthy or toxic forms emerge, normalize, and situate themselves in everyday practice.

Micro-Politics

Even in his earlier writings, Foucault (1965) argued that the locus of power revealed itself in practice rather than the knowledge produced. However, Foucault’s perspective on where power resides transitioned significantly between his earlier writings on discourse (Foucault, 1972), his middle treatments on institutions and structures (Foucault, 1977, 1979), and finally, tacit and local frames in the form of micro-politics. In this latter frame, the origins of power in local and micro-political interactions metastasize into meso-structures. From this emergence, interactions and competition politicize routine practices, which operationalize into individual agency (N. Rose & Miller, 1992). Thus, power develops memory by reproducing prototypical agents (Hogg, 2001), localized hierarchies (Blau & Scott, 1962), and marginalization processes (L. A. Bell, 2016).

Discourse (statements and structures of collective communication) at this practice level reveals who is entitled to define “truth” (Foucault, 1980). At the most basic micro-political level, team heuristics as group-level rules form local discursive practices (Yamagishi et al., 1998). A desire to remain aligned with those in closest proximity immerses into notions of the self (Mead, 1934). In this interactive process, discursive rules emerge into routine practice—Foucault's (2002) “gaze”—and disperse rules and structures (Rucker et al., 2012). By extension, frameworks for truth simultaneously define deviance (Becker, 1963), including what constitutes expertise. Because the normative value of micro-defined truth becomes tacit, meso-universes are less likely to question them because of assumed truth and expertise (Briñol, et al., 2007).

Thus, the use of the term *micro* to define this locus of power becomes loaded through its implications of how power sustains and shifts over time. Within this conceptualization, power becomes micro-dynamic, where small changes in the rhythm of tasks and processes have outsized influence over direction and outcomes. Power is also microbiological, in that it lives in the small things such as the dialogic practices of leadership (Cunliffe & Eriksen, 2011) and also in the enactment of voice (including silence as one form) as a representation of perceived empowerment (Avey & Van Dyne, 2009). The relationship between power and voice is the subject of the next section.

Power and Voice

A key element within systems theory is the notion that systems continually transform in search of equilibrium (Cilliers, 1999, 2001). Within Foucault’s (1980, 2002) conceptualization that power is everywhere, this systemic search for equilibrium manifests itself within a continual rebalancing of collectives. His primary interest was in how individuals became subjugated rather than dominant. In their conceptualization of the relationship between time and organizational change, Crossan et al. (2005) argued that both the dominant and subjugated have power but with different forms of agentic voice, particularly as the dynamics of power shift individually and organizationally over time. Thus, boundaries within systems of power enslave voice for both the

dominant and subjugated, with responses (including resistance) following the same discursive rules as the system of domination being rejected. This ongoing tension between rules of discourse and structure as mechanisms for equilibrium and voice as a mechanism for innovation and change is a fundamental element of Clarke's (Clarke, 2005; Clarke et al., 2017) situational analysis methodology, which I will emphasize in Phase 2 of my study.

The power over voice from existing structures and norms carries significant implications for outcomes, particularly when discursive rules are not healthy. In unhealthy systems, such as those enabling unaddressed TWB, notions of voice and power can become upended. However, even when systems of power foster healthy forms of voice for those who embody either legitimate or relational forms, members of marginalized groups may define and opt for altered permutations of voice. In her essay on the nature of voice in marginalized groups, Parpart (2010) argued that even definitions for agency as synonymous with having voice are biased toward systems of male domination. An example of this domination bias may be Hirschman's (1970) foundational exploration of voice as overt and its opposite being exit. This model for voice only works for those who have the power to leave, a privilege more readily available to those in dominant groups.

Thus, empowerment and subjugation are key elements in any discussion of power and voice; however, neither are so easily distinguished. As already noted, Foucault argued that no object in the system is entirely without voice. However, even an expression of voice may be situationally dependent and ambiguous in its meaning for the agent. Foucault (1965) introduced the concept behind what Clarke and Montini (1993) ultimately termed "implicated and silenced actors." Implicated actors may exert voice, not as individuals and collectives directly within the phenomenon, but with equities in the outcome. As silenced actors, individuals or collectives may be directly impacted but without voice in the dynamic (Clarke & Montini, 1993).

Harkening back to the C. S. Lewis quote from Chapter 1 on the situatedness of perception, how the individual perceives his or her relationship to the systems of domination—in

or out, represented or secondary—influences method of voice. Those who perceive themselves to be powerless may engage overt voice as a form of deviance against a repressive system. However, silence is a nonverbal form of expressing desires (DePaulo & Friedman, 1998). Thus, choosing silence rather than participation in a toxic system of domination may be passive resistance (Fivush, 2010), a form of subjugated silence. Additionally, cultural norms related to power, obligations to the collective, and time horizons may influence distinctions between expressions of power and the meaning of silence (Hofstede, 2003). Thus, understanding the role of power in any phenomenon relies upon the ability to understand where the individual or collective "sits" in space and time as well as the meaning they assign to that space.

Thus, voice is a form of power (Islam & Zyphur, 2005) and an expression of meaning (Charmaz & Mitchell, 1996). Understanding this intersection of power, voice, and TWB within the intelligence situation will be critical to understanding responses to the dynamic. Major theories and research related to TWB and its relationship to power, voice, and context among peers and colleagues are the subject of the next section.

Counterproductive Workplace Behavior

This section will establish a foundation for TWB by reviewing significant nomenclatures and related concepts of counterproductive workplace behavior (CWB). CWB frameworks are numerous and broad. However, this discussion will be concise in order to limit the scope to definitions and units of analyses as frameworks for comparison during the subsequent discussions of TWB. Their relationships to ontological approaches to power and related systems will be a primary theme of the section.

CWB as a theoretical model is diffuse. In a correlational study of five U.S. organizations, Spector et al. (2006) defined CWB as intentional behavior designed to harm organizations or their members through five behaviors: abuse of others, production deviance, sabotage, theft, and withdrawal. Using a review of literature, Lau et al. (2003) expanded the included behaviors to 11, ranging from excessive absenteeism to theft. Thus, behaviors covered relational

frameworks (in the Spector study) but also anti-organizational behaviors with legal implications. The assumption of purposeful action (Fox et al., 2001) is the link between the definitions, even though specific behaviors might vary in underlying motivations (Spector et al., 2006).

The wide swath of behaviors included in definitions of CWB makes the construct unwieldy and agnostic on the impact that organizational contexts may have on the efficacy of certain behaviors. Significantly, Lau et al. (2003) argued that CWB is directed at the organization rather than fellow employees, framing impacts to others in the organization as by-products. However, the role of intent is simplified. In their instrumental model of CWB, Fox and Spector (2010) argued that individuals engage in behaviors that they perceive will help them achieve their goals, thus normalizing negative behaviors when individuals believe they are productive. In these roles, the perpetrator, team members, and organization become passive feedback systems to perpetuate and sustain the behaviors. While the Lau team addressed extant literature on theft and other forms of deviance as expressions of silent voice (e.g., Altheide et al., 1978; Hollinger & Clark, 1983), broader conceptualizations of CWB largely ignored research into the nature of power at multiple levels and systemic impacts.

Although CWB attention to the role of power has been scant, parallel constructs of destructive behavior have centered their research on hierarchy, with models differentiating between behavior, intent, and in some cases, disposition. For instance, Tepper (2000) framed abusive supervision through the behaviors of verbal and nonverbal hostility, including tantrums and public criticism. Neuman and Baron (1997) viewed workplace aggression through intent to harm, either as a terminal goal or instrumental toward a separate outcome. Ashforth (1997) straddled the boundary between disposition and behaviors when he described petty tyranny as the small-minded (disposition) exercise (behavior) of power and developed a Petty Tyranny in Organizations (PTiO) scale to measure underlying behaviors. Similarly, Reed and Bullis (2009) took a hybrid behavioral/outcome approach by using Ashforth's PTiO to identify significant

relationships between what they framed as toxic leadership behaviors and job satisfaction (outcome) among uniformed and civilian personnel.[5]

Although these scholars did not address counterproductive behaviors outside of hierarchy, ontological discussions into destructive leadership formed a microcosm of broader epistemological debates over the nature of power in an increasingly fluid organizational environment (Knight, 2009). In the late-1990s to late-2000s, theories began to emerge on hermeneutic leadership (Ladkin, 2010), relational leadership (Bradbury & Lichtenstein, 2000), and discursive exchange between leaders and followers (Cunliffe & Eriksen, 2011). Notions of followers as conduits of shared (Avolio et al. 1996; Klein et al., 2006) and emergent (Carte et al., 2006) leadership also gained interest, along with the still nascent exploration of followers as leaders (Baker et al., 2016; Emery et al., 2013; Hannah & Lester, 2009). These debates also intersected with broader discussions on social integration amid globalization (Bandura, 1999), corporate sustainability (R. M. Locke, 2002), and the diminishing distinctions between humans and technology (Latour, 1996).

Within this fluidity, a separate set of scholars widened the net on the locus and impact of counterproductive behaviors beyond formal power. Leymann and colleagues (Leymann, 1990; Leymann & Gustafsson, 1996) conceptualized the veritable gang warfare of mobbing as the sustained targeting of one individual by one or more others until the person became defenseless. In a comparative study with two test groups and one control group, Zapf (1999) took a more systemic approach, identifying victim blaming, organizational factors, and marginalization as contributing factors to mobbing.

[5] One might wonder why Reed and Bullis chose to use Ashforth's PTiO to assess the impact of toxic leadership on job satisfaction, rather than Schmidt's (2008) Toxic Leadership Scale (TLS) published the year before. While the authors do not indicate the data collection period for their study, the TLS may not have been available to them at the time of measurement. They may also have not been aware of the TLS because it was so new.

As with hierarchy-based constructs of counterproductive behavior, distinctions between constructs not defined by formal power can be ambiguous. For instance, mobbing has been depicted as group abuse toward one or a smaller number of victims and bullying a more binary interaction, where one individual attempts to subordinate another (Einarsen, 1999, 2000; Einarsen et al., 2011). However, Zapf and Einarsen (2005) have argued that distinctions between the terms are more regional than factorial. Both have been conceptualized as multi-stage (Leymann, 1990; Zapf, 1999), multi-causal (Einarsen, 1999; Hauge et al., 2007, 2009; Leymann, 1996), systemic (Zapf, 1999; Zapf et al., 1996), and strategic, whether perpetrated within a framework of informal power (Einarsen et al., 2011) or legitimacy (Ferris et al., 2007).

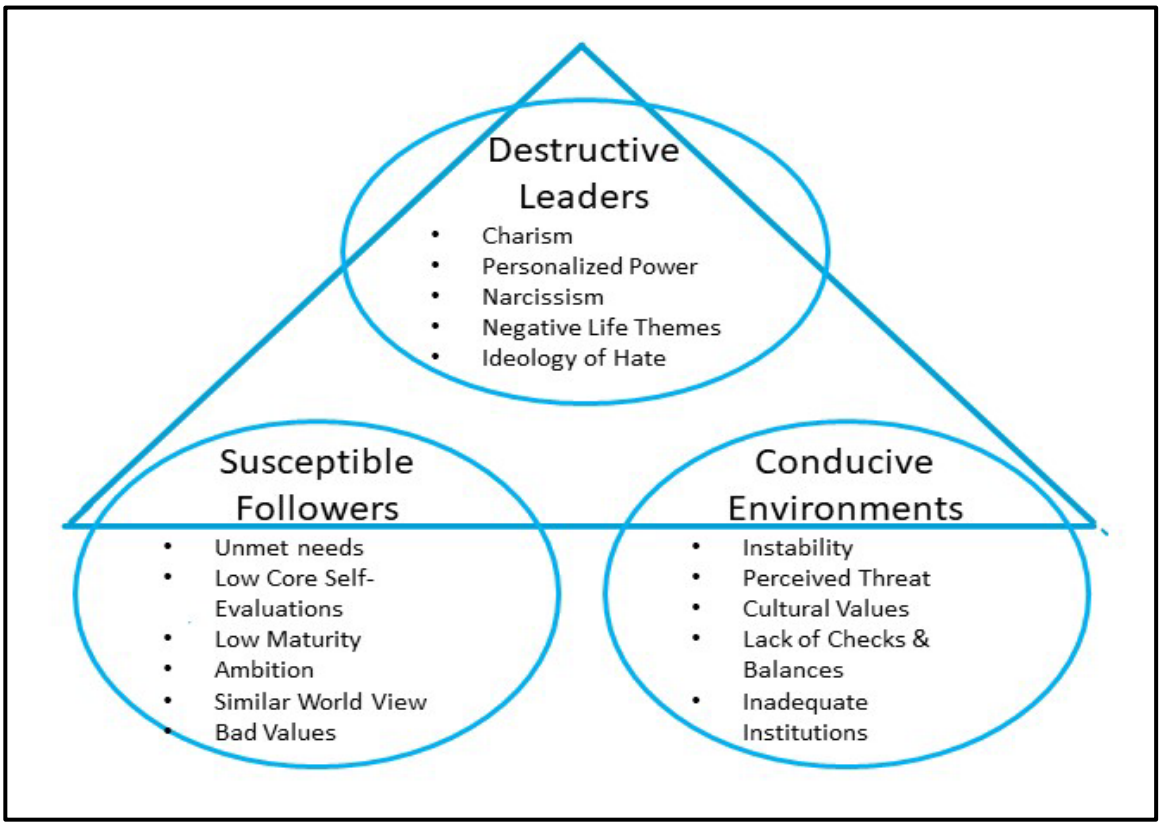
Broadening the scope further, additional scholars have explored the insidious impact of less overt incivilities, such as tone of voice, failures to say please and thank you, and eye-rolling (Andersson & Pearson, 1999). Although ambiguous to identify and often unintended, research indicates that low-level incivilities, such as silent treatments and unprofessional tone of voice (Pearson & Porath, 2005), diminish intellectual firepower and collaboration through avoidance behavior (R. A. Taylor, 2019), distract from core missions, and contribute to personnel losses. Formal and informal power frame interactions, with targets typically lower in status than the instigator, even if there is no direct reporting relationship (P. R. Johnson & Indvik, 2001). As will be discussed further in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5, these ambiguous power frameworks hold significance within the IC because power emerges in complex mixes of hierarchy, expertise, and reputation.

An evolving recognition that the behavior systematizes its effects regardless of the locus of power has linked much of the contemporary research across CWB constructs. Thus, research removing singular responsibility for toxicity from formal leaders and assigning shared accountability to conducive followers (Lipman-Blumen, 2005a), context (Walton, 2007), and ambiguity (Ashforth, 1997) has become more robust. Padilla et al.'s (2007) foundational model

of the Toxic Triangle (Figure 2.1) depicts this expanded conceptualization, unique in that it assigns equal accountability to destructive leaders, susceptible followers, and conducive environments. As I will discuss in the next section, this systemic framework is foundational to research on TWB.

Figure 2.1

The Toxic Triangle



Note: Adapted from Padilla, A., Hogan, R., & Kaiser, R. B. (2007). Toxic triangle: Destructive leaders, susceptive followers, and conducive environments. *The Leadership Quarterly*, *18*, 176–194.

The relationship between the systematized nature of CWB, responses to it, and outcomes is fundamentally about power, because anyone with the ability to influence the behavior of another has power over them. Additionally, power divides, forming rationing structures by which personnel must divide their time between jockeying for positions on the right side of power and focusing on the core mission (L. A. Bell, 2016). As I discuss in the next

section, concurrent research into TWB, its relationship to ambiguous dichotomies of power and victimhood, and its ontologically systematized nature have followed a path through intersections of status, situational factors, and impacts.

The Evolution of TWB as a Construct

This section of the literature review will review the origins and evolution of the scholarship on TWB. A review of the literature indicates that permutations on the locus of power in toxic environments have evolved over time so that interest has expanded in the impact of TWB among peers and colleagues, the primary interest within my study. Thus, this historical review will serve as a foundation for subsequent sections on the role of power, voice, enablers in the toxic system, responses to the behavior, and the role of culture and the situation.

In their study including 400 North American business leaders, Kusy and Holloway (2009) conceptualized a model of TWB as a systemic phenomenon that manifests itself in individual behaviors, including hostility, shaming, and sabotage. The fault line between the occasional “bad day" and TWB is the sustained nature of the behavior. Over time, the corrosive behavior affects relationships among team members, colleagues, and external stakeholders. These relational impacts ultimately impact organizational outcomes as the behaviors flow back into the enabling system (Chu, 2014; Frost, 2003).

Early conceptualizations of workplace toxicity were singularly focused on formal leadership rather than recognizing the existence and impact of the behaviors at any level. As a construct, TWB originated in the mid-1990s by Whicker (1996), who defined toxic leaders as those who were “maladjusted, malcontent, and often malevolent and malicious” (p. 66). Lipman-Blumen (2005a, 2005b) brought the concept of toxic leadership into the mainstream nomenclature but also created an important junction point toward its conceptualization as a systemic phenomenon by implicating enabling followers as supports to the behavior. Frost (2003, 2004) had identified one such enabling follower two years earlier in the form of “toxic

handlers," depicted in almost heroic fashion as well-meaning souls acting as buffers between the toxic leader and others.

Academic interest in TWB increased in the mid-2000s, particularly in identifying how the elements of TWB were situated and systematized within unique environments. Aforementioned analyses of TWB in critical mission environments were robust during the period. Research by Reed and colleagues (2004, 2010; Reed & Bullis, 2009) linked toxic leadership in the military to failed operations, and by extension, threats to human lives. Similarly, The Joint Commission, (2008) linked power to toxic health care systems, which threatened patient care by enabling intimidating behaviors. Already noted, Padilla et al. (2007) created the first theoretical model of the toxic system in the depiction of a "toxic triangle" consisting of destructive leaders, conducive cultural and operational environments, and susceptible followers. Kusy and Holloway (2009) changed the narrative around TWB into a non-status frame when they demonstrated that toxic behavior originated as a systemic phenomenon that metastasized into destructive toxicity at all levels, regardless of where the toxic personalities resided in the hierarchy. Kusy (2017) developed the first mathematical formula by which organizations can calculate the costs associated with unaddressed TWB. This formula quantified losses for organizations based on resource investments, seniority, and longevity.

Power and Toxic Workplace Behavior

The purpose of the following section is to review literature on TWB through the ontological prism of status. Distinctions will be made between treatments of formal status (toxic leadership) and informal status in the form of peer-to-peer toxicity; as well, implications for voice will be explored. After reviewing literature on responses to TWB, its presence as a systemic element will be further explored by identifying actor-based and situational enablers in the toxic system.

Status in the Toxic Dynamic

TWB relies upon a series of enablers, including personality, target, behavior, motive, and values as separate objects of power, which can only be understood in their interaction (Blumer, 1969). Unlike other constructs of counterproductive workplace behavior, the organization as a separate object is a fifth interactive unit of analysis in TWB because of its systemic frame. Theoretical models and empirical research on TWB frame conceptualize power along two primary axes: formal and informal status.

Formal Status. Status-oriented scholarship on TWB associates the behavior with formal position. Notably, Kellerman (2004) argued that the concept of a toxic leader is a misnomer because toxic personalities cannot lead. Thus, leadership for Kellerman was in the action and not in the being, with toxicity being a disqualifier. However, she was an outlier in her timeframe, as multiple scholars reduced TWB within formal status to a typology of stand-alone traits and motives. While producing the Toxic Leadership Scale (TLS), Schmidt (2008) crossed the threshold between traits and behaviors when he validated abusiveness, self-promotion, authoritarianism, unpredictability, unprofessional (morality or ethically based) behavior, and narcissistic leadership. Kusy and Holloway (2009) identified 12 underlying behaviors in their three-pronged model. D. F. Williams (2005) used an analysis of literature on TWB to produce 18 characteristics and 10 “types” of toxic leaders (e.g., the Paranoid Leader, the Incompetent Leader). Williams’s study was one of the few to segment toxic leaders into multiple subgroupings. Pelletier (2010) expanded the typology to 22 specific toxic behaviors for toxic leaders.

Follow-up scholarship attempted to identify interactions between specific behaviors, traits, motives, and outcomes that formed a gestalt of TWB among formal leaders. One of the first scholars to elevate the discussion within the mainstream, Lipman-Blumen (2005b) defined toxic leaders through a process in which destructive behavior and trait deficiency interacted to harm their organizations and external stakeholders. In a mixed methods study of U.S. Army

personnel, Steele (2011) linked ethical lapses and a lack of interpersonal skills, along with placing self-interest above the unit, with creating a toxic operational environment. He also found significantly negative relationships between toxic leadership and the willingness of military personnel to follow that leader into life-and-death situations. Appelbaum and Roy-Girard (2007) and Reed (2004, 2010, 2015) identified a trajectory between self-interest (motive), indifference to subordinates (behavior), and poor organizational climate (outcomes). All of Reed's research has been in critical mission, military environments. Other scholars also began to move the unit of analysis beyond a formal status framework.

Informal Status. As noted earlier, scholarship in the early-2000s began to expand theories of organizational power to include informal status through reputation, political acumen, and expertise (Bolman & Deal, 2017; Huberman et al., 2004; Ridgeway & Walker, 1995). As agency became reconceptualized away from wiring diagrams and into perceived relationships of power (Daugherty et al., 1998; Pfeffer, 1993), the locus of workplace harm as an instrumental and terminal goal also became status neutral (Anderson & Bushman, 2002). This turn toward power to harm outside of hierarchy was a critical juncture in realigning TWB away from a strict focus on the traits, behaviors, and intentions of toxic personalities. Within this more systemic frame, scholarship began to appreciate the array of methods that toxic actors with relational power have at their disposal to influence their environments (Hodson et al., 2006). This academic recognition of the power behind peer-to-peer TWB and how team members respond to it forms the basis for my research question.

Hierarchy satisfies a human need for order, structure, and transparency (Frenkel-Brunswik, 1951; Neuberg & Newsom, 1993). Scholars have explored the nature of TWB as fulfilling a constellation of human needs, including those of followers. Reconceptualizing victim accountability as a form of mutuality between toxic leaders and victims, Lipman-Blumen (2005a, 2005b) framed the psychological, psychosocial, external, heroic, existential, and self-visionary needs of followers as co-objects in the system. Further,

Padilla et al. (2007) argued that susceptible followers were complicit through either collusion or conformity. Aquino and colleagues (Aquino, 2000; Aquino & Bradfield, 2000; Aquino & Lamertz, 2004) identified traits and triggers enacted by victims to generate their own victimization. However, in his exploration of the treatment of lepers and the mentally ill in Middle Ages France, Foucault (1965) referenced the pattern in which those responsible for creating systems of power and privilege blamed those on the margins for their own victimization. Thus, toxic victim blaming raises interesting ontological debates about the systems of domination in which scholars function.

Ridgeway and Walker (1995) defined status as the degree to which one is admired or liked by others, raising the question of how a toxic personality can achieve status. However, the way informal status empowers depends on organizational prerogatives, culture, and norms. Toxic personalities rarely see themselves as toxic. Additionally, as will be discussed in depth in a subsequent section, outcome-focused—so-called bottom-line cultures—breed TWB at all levels without supports in place to counteract the effects (Holloway & Kusy, 2010; Kusy, 2017; Kusy & Holloway, 2009). Thus, cultures that overvalue expertise and undervalue relationships may tolerate toxicity more readily than those that see strong links between relationships and outcomes. However, sustainability and effects on outcomes can distinguish between situational moments and toxicity. In a review of the literature on abusive supervision, Tepper (2007) warned that situationally neutral labeling of broad sets of behaviors as destructive risked disincentivizing the types of behaviors often needed during crises.

Lacking awareness into their own behavior ultimately inhibits the toxic personality's ability to reflect on their impact. However, contemporary scholarship on TWB acknowledges the outsized impact that toxic personalities without formal status can have on outcomes. Kusy and Holloway (2009) defined the toxic personality as "anyone who engages in counterproductive work behaviors that debilitate individuals, teams, and even organizations over the long term" (p. 4). Their aforementioned behavioral model of shaming, hostility, and sabotage also aligns with

standard definitions of bullying (Einarsen, 2000; Felblinger, 2008; Tracy et al., 2006). However, unlike the behavioral-typology approach of prior status-based research on toxic leadership, Kusy and Holloway identified the management, team communication, and practice misalignments—Foucault's (1977) “gaze”—that transform organizations into toxic meso- systems.

Foucault (1990) argued that power can only survive if it is masked as something else, giving those with relational status deceptive power. In their study of horizontal violence among nurses, R. A. Taylor and Taylor (2017) identified the three *enactor types* of non-status toxic personalities: the unempathetic, pathological bully seeking power; the self-justified bully engaging in “tough love”; and the unprofessional coworker engaging in low-level incivilities (e.g., eye-rolling and condescension). Thus, TWB manifests itself in different ways within an array of motives, some of which are misguided attempts to further organizational goals. However, toxic personalities effectively contextualize their behavior to the situation (Kusy, 2017; Kusy & Holloway, 2009), which privileges those who understand how to leverage organizational norms to reach their goals.

The contextualization element returns the discussion back to the question of where the origins of TWB lie. If toxic personalities can effectively contextualize their behavior to mask their impacts situationally, then who or what is the origin of the toxicity? The toxic personality, the organization, or the situation that enables the behavior to be valued? The answer is yes to all three. Contextualization is a manifestation of toxic privilege. Toxic privilege becomes particularly insidious when the personality has a reputation as prototypical within that organizational culture (Hogg, 2001; Hogg & Terry, 2000). This normalization of TWB reveals itself in the emotive rules, values, and practices within the organization (Giddens, 1991), as well as standards for marginalization (Anjum et al., 2019). Thus, organizations may not hold toxic personalities who they view as prototypically accountable when their behavior reflects a normalized framework for how to project power.

Responses to Toxic Workplace Behavior

Looked at through the frame of Foucault's (1980) gaze, TWB operationalizes as a form of toxic memory by flowing back into the system at the micro-level as a set of sustained, normalized behaviors that transcend time, place, and position (Lammers et al., 2013). Left unaddressed, toxic organizations follow a trajectory of unproductive emotion management (Chu, 2014), disengagement and distrust (Fitzgibbons, 2018), lost talent, and ultimately, organizational failure (Kusy, 2017). Embedded within each of these outcomes is the potential for an array of responses as expressions of power and voice, which may change over time as the behavior intersects with individuality and the situation.

In a 2019 interview, R. A. Taylor argued that TWB creates four levels of victims: targets, witnesses, those who learn of the events later, and external stakeholders. Responses began with emotions that are internal and manifest themselves in an array of conditions. Research in multiple industries links TWB to physical, psychological, and emotional reactions, including depression, burnout, frustration, negative affect, physical illnesses (Bowling & Beehr, 2006; Li et al. 2016), higher rates of suicide, diminished morale (Reed, 2010), and post-traumatic stress disorder (Antai-Otong, 2001). Organizational and dispositional factors may moderate these relationships (Webster et al., 2014). However, the causal path between behaviors, moderators, and outcomes has not been clearly identified in the literature. Additionally, the trajectory between experiencing behavior, the onset of symptoms, and outcomes is iterative (Goldberg & Huxley, 2001), which complicates the ability to directly link behavior and outcomes (Henderson et al., 2011). These outstanding questions remain significant research opportunities.

This macro-environment experiences the effects of TWB through responses, such as behavioral changes toward peers, colleagues, and families, including tolerance; adjustments of standards, motivation, and communication patterns; and avoidance. Reconfiguration of responsibilities and decision processes are common tactical and survival responses that emerge into a series of toxic strategies (Bhandarker & Rai, 2019; Kusy & Holloway, 2009;

Webster et al., 2014). In fact, across multiple studies of incivility in the workplace, Pearson and Porath (2005) found that 70% of participants admitted to “venting” to family and friends.

While responses may be complex, how individuals within the toxic phenomenon react rests on power. In their mixed methods study of business leaders, Kusy and Holloway (2009) identified a response calculation that was simultaneously complex and simple. When participants had positional or other forms of power over the individual, they reconfigured processes to moderate the impact of the behavior. Pelletier (2012) found that follower perceptions of whether they were favored by the formal leader or whether the target was in their favored group influenced perceptions of whether behavior was toxic, although not necessarily their willingness to challenge behavior. Conversely, responses to toxic personalities who were either superiors or peers were similar to each other; participants either adjusted their own behaviors or they departed from the organization. The challenge for leaders and organizations is in locating the origins. TWB’s systemic nature makes identifying a direct path complex. For example, research into the related construct of horizontal violence (hostility and aggression) within the critical-mission nursing environment found that reactions were typically disproportionate to and more widely experienced than the original incident (Taylor & Taylor, 2017, 2018), which could challenge timely and effective measures to address it.

A binary conclusion might be that individuals choose to leave toxic environments when other responses are not proving to be adequate. However, multiple studies have found that complex individual and situational factors influence decisions to “stay or go,” including perceptions of affective and normative commitment, clarity on objectives (Ghosh et al., 2013), risks of remaining versus leaving (Vardaman et al., 2008), and perceptions of how unique or interesting the job is (Beecham et al., 2008). Perceptions of mobility may also play a role. In a study of uniformed and civilian U.S. defense personnel who likely had few mobility options (i.e., power over where they worked), K. R. Williams (2018) found that 51% of the participants

reported adopting avoidance tactics in response to TWB. None of these studies tracked whether responses changed over time.

Returning to Kusy and Holloway's (2009) identification of power as the key factor in response, departure may also be empowered voice through one final act of resistance (Hirschman, 1970). This relationship is key because multiple studies have identified mechanisms by which TWB strips individuals of that voice, including Hodson et al.'s (2006) multi-analysis of organizational ethnographies and Taylor & Taylor's (2017) descriptive study of peer-to-peer TWB among nurses. Both studies identified enactments of silence as voice and subjugated silence. Thus, as with power in general, toxic privilege is Newtonian in its ability to generate its own resistance (Foucault, 1972, 1980). However, that resistance may emerge as a enactment of team voice that systematizes TWB as members engage in avoidance behavior and refuse to collaborate (Kusy & Holloway, 2009; R. A. Taylor, 2019; R. A. Taylor & Taylor, 2017, 2018).

Returning to Foucault's (1980) locus of power in micro-political processes, responses may originate in the individual, but rapidly metastasize into the meso-system. If an organization depends upon fluid team structures for success (as exists in most IC entities), this reactive form of voice may even operationalize into the macro environment. In fact, multiple empirical studies have identified a spiraling effect from TWB that transcends the wider organization into relationships with families and friends as well (Kusy & Holloway, 2009; Pearson & Porath, 2005; Webster et al., 2014; K. R. Williams, 2018)

The nature of status as objectified through voice raises interesting questions in relationship to responses to toxicity. One might expect that the lesser span of control that those outside of formal status positions have would invoke a stronger response to TWB than among those with formal status, due to perceptions of vulnerability, fear of marginalization, and the potential for losing the position entirely. However, many organizations also have more transparent regulatory frameworks for dealing with counterproductive behavior by those in

recognized leadership positions, leaving TWB from team members in a regulatory gray area. Thus, what other factors may mitigate the role of status? If status influences response to TWB, then do quasi-status titles, such as “team lead” and “senior analyst,” provide ambiguity to status-based responses and redress mechanisms?

Supporting Objects within the Toxic System

A collection of supporting elements nurtures the toxic system. Narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy have framed much of the research seeking more clinical explanations for the behavior. Additionally, three objects have power in the toxic system: the toxic personality (already discussed); toxic enablers; and toxic buffers. Cultural and meso-dysfunction inhabit their own place in the toxic situation as simultaneous contributors to and recipients of the behavior. Each is discussed below.

Toxic Protectors and Buffers as Enablers. Toxic protectors and buffers present another layer that traverses other elements of TWB within the framework of power. Toxic protectors are individuals, generally with formal status, who shield the toxic personality from accountability because they gain advantage from the individual’s TWB, typically either through one or more relational frames: nepotism, derived power, or functional advantage from the individual’s productivity. Literature suggests that the fundamental intent of the protector to gain from behavior (i.e., to increase their own power) is a key variable in the toxic system (Kusy & Holloway, 2009). However, research indicates that the ability of toxic personalities to manipulate relationships to their advantages (Jonason et al., 2012) through contextualization may also create passive enablers who are unaware of the magnitude of the individual’s impact and the consequence of the protector’s support (Kusy & Holloway, 2009).

The intent behind the toxic handler/toxic buffer is more complex. Early depictions of the toxic handler by Frost (2003, 2004), as well as Appelbaum and Roy-Girard (2007) conceptualized the role as an empathetic individual, either with formal or informal status, who absorbs the impact of the TWB to shield the organization. Kusy and Holloway (2009) adopted a

separate term to describe the role—"toxic buffer”—and reframed the quasi-positive depiction from Frost and Appelbaum and Roy Girard as a contributor to the toxic dynamic by helping to shield and enable the toxic personality.

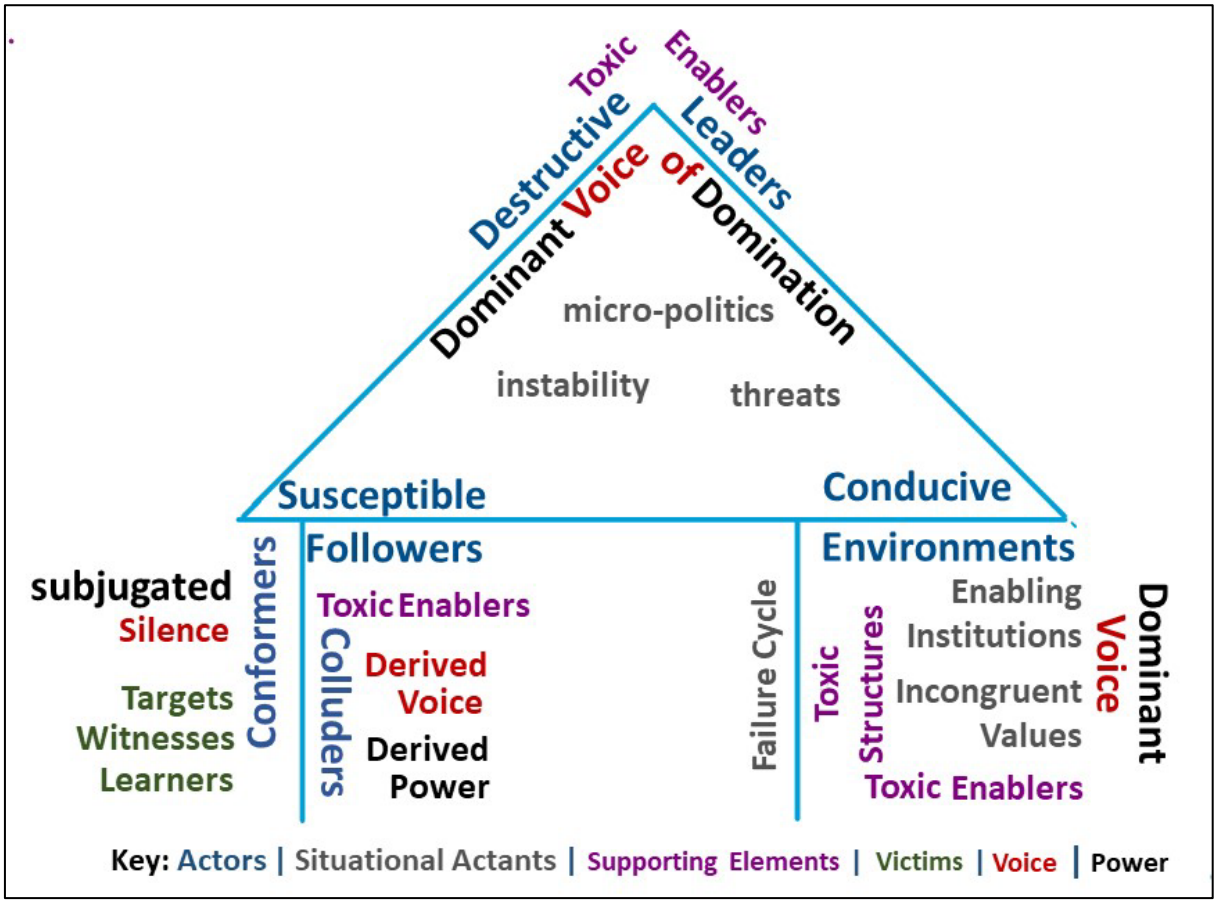
Much like toxic personalities, buffers may differ in their motivations. Additionally, depending on where protectors and buffers align in their own statuses, they may straddle the roles. For example, someone who has the relational power to garner the toxic personality’s trust and uses that trust to buffer the impact of the behavior is enabling by buffering. They may gain relational power, not only from the toxic personality, but also from the hero image they gain as the one who absorbs the blows. However, by shielding toxic personalities from accountability, they create silent subsystems that bind practice (Foucault, 2002) to toxic power. Rather than use their power to advocate for those marginalized and implicated by the TWB, they shift accountability for navigating the dynamic to victims (Foucault, 1965).

Kusy and Holloway’s (2009) array of supporting objects extends Padilla et al.'s (2007) Toxic Triangle into a broader framework by softening distinctions between enabling followers and conducive organizations. The triangle extends even further when one integrates Foucault's (1965,1977, 2002) arguments that toxic systems hold victims partially responsible for their subjection through the linking of systems of domination to voice and practice. Finally, Padilla et al.’s model obtains additional heft when R. A. Taylor’s (2019) three victims (targets, witness, and learners) are placed within it. In a reformulation of the concept at Figure 2.2, Padilla’s colluders and destructive leaders are toxic actors in the system, deriving voice and power from relationships to other systemic elements in gray. Conformers in the form of Taylor’s three victims may not overtly engage in TWB. However, they lose power in favor of subjugated silence. Kusy and Holloway’s (2009) buffers and protectors as toxic enablers inhabit each level of the system. Multiple permutations of protectors are possible in each position, dependent upon relationships to actors and actants throughout the system. Situational actants that are tangible and more organizationally controllable are below the triangle. Actants less within the span of

control by organizations and actors in the system float in the center. These less predictable actants inhabit a power space in which the dominant voice becomes the singular voice of domination for the rest of the system.

Figure 2.2

Voice, Power, Actors, and Actants in the Toxic Triangle



Note: Adapted from Padilla, A., Hogan, R., & Kaiser, R. B. (2007). Toxic triangle: Destructive leaders, susceptive followers, and conducive environments. *The Leadership Quarterly*, *18*, 176–194; Kusy, M., & Holloway, E. (2009). *Toxic workplace! Managing toxic personalities and their systems of power*. John Wiley & Sons; and Taylor, R. A. (2019, May 21). *Horizontal violence and organizational climate* [Video]. *Used by permission.*

Even in this more robust form, Padilla's et al.'s (2007) Toxic Triangle is limited by its two-dimensional structure. If one accepts the systemic nature of TWB, then one also accepts that a shift in one segment will contribute to changes throughout the system, including far-flung regions not visibly exposed to the dynamic (Cilliers, 2001). However, a triangle cannot represent

the flow between the elements and how they influence changes in each other. The triangle also does not accurately depict another set of concepts in the study of TWB: the roles played by the traits of narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy.

Narcissism, Machiavellianism, and Psychopathy. As noted earlier, attempts to identify elements of TWB have typically delineated traits, behaviors, and dispositions. A segment of research has taken a clinical approach to typing toxic personalities and behaviors by exploring the roles of narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy as behavioral underpinnings. Narcissism consists of an excessive need for enhancement, admiration, and power; an inclination to view feedback as envy; and a lack of empathy toward others (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). In the workplace, narcissism has been associated with increased productivity (Doty & Fenlason, 2013) but also organizational cynicism (Dobbs & Do, 2019). Research has also shown time plays a role in perception, with leaders high in narcissism receiving early, passionate support but losing that support over the long term (Ong et al., 2016). Reed (2015) devoted a full chapter to narcissism in his book on toxic leadership, identifying seven “habits” used to spot them. D. F. Williams (2005) denoted the narcissism as one of her 18 traits of toxic leaders. Additionally, Schmidt (2008) identified the trait as part of his TLS.

Individuals find meaning in their interaction with other social, physical, and abstract objects, which function as self-concept symbols (Charon, 1989). Thus, narcissism as a trait would be relatively benign if it were isolated from behavior in interaction with others. However, the trait accompanies a series of destructive behaviors affecting people, organizations, and values. Using the “Dark Triad” of narcissism, Machiavellianism (ends justifying the means), and psychopathy (Paulhus & Williams, 2002) as their theoretical lens, Jonason et al. (2012) delineated the traits between hard (e.g., open threats and building alliances) and soft (e.g., joking and ingratiating) tactics across genders. The Jonason team found that psychopathy was more strongly associated with hard tactics, narcissism more strongly associated with soft tactics, and Machiavellianism bridged the two. While they found no significant gendered

differences related to being a toxic personality, they found males were more likely to adopt hard tactics, and females, soft tactics.

A limitation of applying narcissism, Machiavellianism, and other “isms” to toxic behaviors lies in the clinical nature of diagnosing narcissism and psychopathy, along with the contextual framing of Machiavellianism. For instance, while Schmidt (2008) identified narcissism in the development of his TLS, his purposeful study population consisted of U.S. Army personnel and their families. While clinical experts may have been included in the participants, he did not document them in the study findings.

Contextual factors are also critical when evaluating the impact of “isms,” particularly Machiavellianism. In his 2007 literature review mentioned earlier, Tepper warned against arbitrarily condemning traits that may enable bold action during crises. Similarly, the impact of a Machiavellian “win-at-all-costs” approach can be situationally positive in critical mission environments, in which the preservation of human life is the primary goal (Reed, 2010; R. A. Taylor, 2019). The question of context will figure heavily in my study of TWB in the critical mission environment of the IC. Thus, are the traits and behaviors normally associated with TWB considered toxic in that environment? If they are, then how do analysts and operations personnel respond over time? If not, are there traits and behaviors unique to the IC situation that are considered toxic and how do personnel respond to them?

Culture and Meso-Dysfunction. TWB cuts a swath through questions related to the role of norms, the nature of deviance, and the juxtaposition between outcomes and the methods used to obtain them. Thus, TWB links micro-behavior to meso-dysfunction. However, as the literature indicates, TWB’s systemic frame challenges any ability to locate the origination point for the behavior.

Group norms are implicit expectations of behavior and standards that develop longitudinally (Sherif, 1936) as individuals observe, interact, and conform to the dominant group (Thibault & Kelley, 1959). Group understanding becomes normative as it systematizes into

practices, structures, and institutions. This systematization has a significant carryover effect, as individuals transfer norms of cooperation, conflict, and behavior endorsed in one context to others (Bettenhausen & Murnighan,1991). Norms become elements of culture and identity through repeated endorsement (or sanction) of action and attitudes (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). Voluntarily violating these norms in ways that harm the organization constitutes deviance (S. L. Robinson & Bennett, 1995). However, because norms are socially constructed and defined within how behaviors and standards contribute to outcomes (Kaplan, 1975), organizational norms can become misaligned with “hyper norms” of ethics and morality (Warren, 2003).

Research suggests that excessively focusing on organizational outcomes without aligning organizational structures to higher values are antecedents to TWB. In a two-year study of bullying behavior between sales executives, Lloyd (2019) found that systemic endorsement of bottom-line profit as a normative value without a concomitant commitment to ethics led to a “bailiff system” of special behavioral privileges for high-producing sales agents. This system not only endorsed subterfuge between coworkers to drive competition but created a parallel system of marginalization toward those who did not fit the bailiff system. This toxic dynamic is not limited to profit-producing organizations. Research related to TWB in nonprofits (Hitchcock, 2015) and federal workplaces (K. R. Williams, 2018) indicated that misalignment between outcomes and values was also an antecedent to TWB in those frameworks.

Culture reflects higher norms when they penetrate all levels of the system. However, research also suggests that this disconnect between communicated norms (espoused theories) and practice (theories-in-use; Argyris & Schon, 1974, 1996) is a primary linkage between micro-toxicity and meso-dysfunction as the behavior systematizes (Kusy & Holloway, 2009). This disconnect can create a toxic, triadic reciprocal effect (Bandura, 1986) in which the behavior influences processes, discourse, and values at the meso-level, which then provides a reciprocal influence of future micro-processes, discourses, and values that revolve back into the system

(Dreyfus et al., 1983; Foucault, 1980, 2002). The behavior may be internalized as symbolic of having devalued victims (R. A. Taylor, 2019), as rewarded (Lian et al., 2012), or as a reflection of organizational incompetence (Roter, 2011).

Thus, micro-toxicity emerges into the meso-level through toxic decision-making as tacit practice. Maitlis and Ozcelik (2004) argued that this emergence occurs through three primary phases: tabooed topics, emotional contagion, and broken cohesion between management and team members. Ultimately, team climate declines, a dynamic that remains after the person departs (Holloway & Kusy, 2010; Kusy, 2017; Kusy & Holloway, 2009). Once systematized, the TWB may no longer be considered deviant because norms, values, and culture have moved into alignment (Tepper, 2000).

The literature in this section suggests that the toxic system relies upon multiple sets of motives and positions. However, TWB victimizes more than merely the target, thus raising significant questions about whether research on responses to the behavior should take a broader perspective on who the respondents are. I anticipated that stories of toxic events I received during data collection for my study would reveal IC personnel playing these roles. Within the IC context, how do choices (either passive or active) to become a buffer or protector constitute responses to TWB? If they are part of the response array, then could the motives of those adopting those roles be more complex than merely power, benevolence, or simple unawareness? In crises when events are moving quickly, are buffers and protectors viewed as necessary short-term elements to drive critical mission outcomes? Can individuals move in and out of the roles of toxic personality, protector, buffer, and victim in context, particularly if narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy are not limited to the toxic personality in that environment? Further, what is the role of the situation in a system in which the behavior is either tolerated, or at the extreme, has become a normative value?

Situated Toxic Workplace Behavior

Generalizations about situations are difficult to make because organizations function under interacting sets of common and unique factors. For example, this literature review has already explored linkages between TWB and specific traits, behaviors, and motivations. Additionally, as will be discussed in a subsequent section, excessively outcome-focused cultures have also been associated with the behavior (Appelbaum et al., 2007; Appelbaum et al., 2006; Holloway & Kusy, 2010; Lloyd, 2019). However, research also suggests that the situation is a critical variable when evaluating the impact of having a rigid outcome focus. Even typically destructive behaviors, such as directing profanity at group members, may not only be normative but incentivizing in some environments (Martens et al., 2015). Thus, identifying toxic leaders and coworkers is a complex, constructive process reliant upon the situatedness of history, relational factors, individual perspective, and organizational norms.

Using standard TWB typologies is particularly complex in military and intelligence environments because hierarchy and discursive rules found destructive in some contexts are necessary and even cohesive, particularly during crises (Tepper, 2007). For critical mission organizations, the outcomes may be existential. A significant body of research exists on the impact of TWB in military command environments, with the U.S. Army as a significant focus. Of the 15 studies on toxicity in the military cited in this literature review, 13 used the U.S. Army as a backdrop and the remaining two focused on the U.S. Air Force.

While commercialized profit is not an outcome variable within the U.S. military, hierarchy in that environment may support outcomes that value saving some lives over others. Dagless (2018) and Reed (2010) have rejected the demonization of command environments as wholly destructive, but rather, necessary for unit cohesion. As Reed (2010) said:

> When the enemy is in the wire and you are down to the last rounds of ammunition, it is not the time to call for a focus group. It is rarely appropriate, however, to use humiliating, demeaning, and belittling behavior” (p. 60).

Additionally, in a study of civilian and uniformed defense personnel, Aubrey (2013) found no support for “commanding” in his Toxic Pyramid of Traits, but rather, ineffective power management. Most interestingly, he found that perceptions of TWB remained consistent across home-base, forward-deployed, and combat environments.

Research on the role of the command environment in incentivizing TWB in health care is more ambiguous. Coccia (1998) argued that strict hierarchy in health care organizations is an indicator of a toxic work environment. Conversely, R. A. Taylor (2019) argued that health care and military environments function within similar frames. Health care workers execute critical mission objectives within crisis environments that often require more rigid forms of hierarchy to maximize efficiency and minimize mistakes. Toxicity depends on the manner in which this dynamic is managed in situ. Similarly, in their study of health care workers, Holloway and Kusy (2010) found that the ability to manage the human dynamic constituted the dividing line between hierarchy and TWB. Thus, hierarchy may not be an antecedent to TWB in critical mission situations, but rather an intervening variable between intent, behavioral management, and outcomes.

Failure to recognize situational factors may result in unidentified latent effects when measuring the impact of TWB across organizational and cultural frameworks. For example, studies of military, civilian, and multicultural populations have conflated methods and results validated outside of those environments. Schmidt’s (2008) TLS was validated using a predominantly military test sample but is commonly used as the measure or to define the construct in civilian environments (e.g., R. M. Bell, 2017; Hadadian & Sayadpour, 2018; Tavanti, 2011). Conversely, military theorists commonly use definitions developed in civilian environments, such as Dagless’s (2018) adoption of Padilla et al.'s (2007) Toxic Triangle model. Although Mueller (2012) addressed TWB in civilian and military contexts in his dissertation on the behavior, he used Kusy and Holloway’s (2009) civilian-based research findings in his discussion of TWB in the military. Aubrey (2013) developed his own definition of toxic behaviors

using a sample consisting of uniformed and civilian U.S. Army employees. Finally, TWB was validated as a construct in low-power-distance/low-collectivist North America. While it has been applied in numerous high-power-distance/high-collectivist environments (e.g., Hadadian & Sayadpour, 2018; Özer et al., 2017), the toxicity of specific traits and behaviors has not been validated in those works, just assumed. Thus, we have a series of instruments that have been used across organizational environments for which they have not been validated. If situational factors might affect the validity of instruments to measure the behavior, how might they also need to be considered when evaluating responses to it?

Summary

As the literature in this section demonstrated, TWB traverses complex frameworks of power-based status as a vehicle for voice. This enactment of voice may reveal itself as overt, silent as a form of subjugation, or silent as a form of resistance. While some elements of voice are imposed (such as subjugated silence), forms of voice become part of the feedback system in the toxic environment to normalize the behavior. Meso-dysfunction follows as its own form of silent voice to drive the phenomenon back into the micro-system at the practice level as teammates align their own behaviors either with systems of power or in resistance to them. This path of response lies along a trajectory of broken collaboration and failed outcomes.

The next section will apply TWB constructs and research to the U.S. IC. Many might view the IC as this fantastical place operating in the shadows. However, the community faces many of the same cultural, organizational, and leadership challenges as more traditional work environments, merely on a more complex scale. Because no available research has explored the nature, typologies, or impacts of TWB within the IC, the rest of the literature review will have to settle for the absence of an integrative pathway between them. Thus, the remainder of this chapter will concentrate on the purpose and operating context for the IC as a foundation to a discussion of how what is known about the behavior that might affect responses to TWB in that environment.

Toxic Behavior and the Intelligence Community

A comprehensive exploration of the structures and challenges encountered by the 17 IC entities lies beyond the scope of this study. However, scholars have produced a significant body of unclassified theory and analysis on the business of intelligence and the role of meso-dysfunction within the IC. Although intelligence officers hold a multitude of occupations essential to national security, the preponderance of this literature explores the analytic and operational functions as being the focal point of the information affecting national security decisions. Because of this narrow research focus, the following sections will contain a similarly narrow discussion on the complex human and organizational dynamics affecting intelligence officers to explore how TWB might impact overall operations.

Systemic Ambiguity in the IC

The macro-level framework of the IC resembles military contexts in some ways and not others. IC agencies are not combatant forces, although some agencies are codified into law as combat support agencies and have significant numbers of uniformed personnel. Others have either strategic intelligence, financial, law enforcement, or hybrid missions. Thus, IC entities support diplomatic, national security, and military operations as part of a macro-environment that is ambiguous and fluid. I will explore this ambiguity through a discussion of the systematization of micro-politics; the challenges of failure-induced reform efforts; and conflicting post-9/11 identities in the IC.

Systematization of Micro-Politics in the IC. This portion of the literature review has been a complex process for me to research because I needed to be mindful of how my history in the IC may bias me. However, I have also been challenged by a body of scholarship that explores mission, processes, and cognitive impediments to intelligence analysis without effectively capturing the situatedness, and often unboundedness, of intelligence as a practice. This research opportunity may stem from multiple factors. Many scholars have never had practical intelligence experience and underappreciate the IC's cultural complexities that "being

in it" would offer them. Conversely, the opportunity may also reflect the tabooed nature of topics that highlight human imperfection on intelligence outcomes (Bean, 2009b). Security impediments to writing and publishing research on these topics within the scholarly community may also limit research interest (S. S. Taylor, personal communication, June 23, 2019). Nolan (2019) theorizes that the fear of the "big black Sharpie" of redaction also warns off many scholars inside the IC from producing unclassified research.

I have made the argument that the IC mirrors other mission critical environments in their ambiguities, complexities, and crisis environments. However, Turner (2004) argued that intelligence analysts also face normative uniqueness from having to balance legitimate national security needs for secrecy versus the desire for democratic transparency. At the micro-political level (Dreyfus et al., 1983), this national mission acts out within teams and working groups. Hastie (2011) further framed this unique landscape by identifying six specific elements: its size and diversity; the breadth and scope of data; uncertainty created by adversarial denial and deception (D&D) activities; the unpredictability and outcome magnitude of low-probability events; the challenge of predicting policymaker desires filtered through a political lens; and the ability of national politics to bias intelligence findings.

The functional manifestation of this complex macro environment occurs at the micro-political level. Tirmizi (2008) defines a team as a group of people, either in formal or informal organizations, that interact around a shared purpose that links to the larger mission. However, as noted, the concept of a team may resemble any number of inter- or intra-organizational forms. The fluidity of this landscape interacts with codified structure to bias norms-in-practice at the team level, often based on relational proximity (Griffin, 2015) but also as intelligence officers often must adapt in real time to unanticipated events. In this situation, even approved intelligence production processes becomes alienated from in situ requirements (Richards, 2010).

The data environment's fluidity exemplifies this dynamic. Information management has historically been challenging for intelligence teams. However, Fingar (2011a) argued that the post-9/11 landscape has changed through the addition of non-state (terrorist) and asymmetric threats (e.g., climate change and cyber) that are fluid and mobile. Transitioning from a Cold War framework established to monitor state actors to one that is equally effective against non-state, state, and asymmetric threats has been disruptive to teams, inter-team collaboration, and practice. Additionally, the IC has added four more entities since 2004, including those with financial and law enforcement missions operating under different legal authority and norms.

Collaboration among intelligence officers is critical to mission success (Lemyre et al., 2011). However, the collaboration environment has challenges at each level of the system. I discuss collaboration challenges associated with conflicting collaboration and competition requirements at the micro-level in a subsequent section. For the purposes of this section, systems designed to foster collaboration have created a data explosion at the team level (Nolan, 2013), adding to the challenges that intelligence officers face in separating good data from bad or irrelevant data (Arkes & Kajdasz, 2011; Wohlstetter, 1962). Further, the emergence of social media as both instrumental data source and as operational networks for adversaries (Lowenthal, 2014) has created an entirely new data pool.

Institutional mechanisms designed to protect sources and methods also challenge the broader data-sharing environment, often by framing sharing through institutional power. Intelligence is defined as anything collected through clandestine means. However, intelligence officers are controlled in their access to it through a stratified subsystem of compartments (L. K. Johnson, 2015). While post-9/11 reforms attempted to transition the culture from a "need to know" to a "duty to share" (9/11 Commission, 2004; McConnell, 2007), compartmentalization continues to create in-groups and out-groups through perceptions of psychological ownership (Davies, 2004; Van Dyne & Pierce, 2004). This phenomenon is micro-political in that many compartments are managed at the sub-group level. While she does not link the phenomenon to

TWB, Maras (2017) has conceptualized excess compartmentalization in the IC as impeding access and collaboration as a "paradox of secrecy" that threatens trust and incentivizes abuse of power. Thus, while necessary, compartmentalization as a gatekeeper function normalizes systems of domination (Clarke, 1991) by objectifying into turf battles, specialized language and skills associated with specific INTs, and tools (Nolan, 2013) that resystematize through the gaze of routine practice and discourse at the micro-political level (Dreyfus et al., 1983; Foucault, 1972, 1977; Johnston, 2005).

The challenges outlined in this section pose significant relational implications for intelligence officers, and by extension, the nation's security. Ambiguity has been associated with bullying between team members (Hauge et al., 2009), harassment (Bowling & Beehr, 2006), and toxic decision processes (Maitlis & Ozcelik, 2004). Additionally, perceptions of being overwhelmed by workload have been associated with counterproductive workplace behavior in high-stakes (The Joint Commission, 2006) and more routine (Hadadian & Sayadpour, 2018) work environments. Data is an intelligence analyst's primary resource, and power over resources has been linked to toxic team processes (R. A. Taylor & Taylor, 2017). The relationship between misuse of power and TWB has been documented, particularly in excessively outcome-focused work environments (Appelbaum et al., 2007, 2006; Holloway & Kusy, 2010; Lipman-Blumen, 2005a; Lloyd, 2019). Ever-present reform efforts in reactions to failure add another layer to this ambiguous environment.

Reform and Complexity. Literature suggests that reform efforts are common reactions to intelligence failures, with each challenging missions, organizational and individual identities, relationships, perceptions of order, and meaning (Aldrich & Kasuku, 2012; Bean, 2009b). Kindsvater (2003) documented six sanctioned reform recommendations between 1955 and 1996, while Warner and McDonald (2005) detailed 14 between 1950 and 1996. While the two studies contained overlap, the inability of scholars to agree on the number of reform recommendations is indicative of the complexity of the topic. Research in commercial and

nonprofit organizations has found that role conflict and ambiguity, overload, and perceptions of undue constraints (Bowling & Beehr, 2006) upend status and generate excessive levels of political gamesmanship (Gilbert et al., 2012), all of which incentivize TWB (Carlock, 2013). One might also ask at what point continual reform evolves into a normative value in their own right, normalizing counterproductive behaviors in response.

Reform recommendations can also be epistemologically different. Dahl (2013) outlined three divergent approaches to reform over the IC's history: the traditional school arguing that failures are always the result of cognitive breakdowns; the reformist school linking failure to broken bureaucracies; and the contrarian school framing failures as breakdowns in collection, not analysis. For example, Jervis (2010) and Davis (2003, 2016) took traditional approaches in arguing for better use of analytic methodologies. Lester (2015) took a reformist approach in arguing for better transparency, accountability, and oversight. Other perspectives have straddled theoretical lines. Heuer (1999) took a hybrid approach in calling for more attention to cognitive limitations, the role of sensory frameworks, and the constructed realities of analyst interactions. The 9/11 Commission (2004) took a traditionalist-reformist approach in blaming failures to share and making incorrect inferences for the 9/11 attacks.

These epistemologically different approaches may reflect broader ambiguities associated with the functional necessities of the various INTs. Highly technically oriented INTs, such as MASINT and GEOINT, function within positivist frames of discreet data-gathering and statistical analyses, although understanding the human behavior behind D&D efforts is critical. Conversely, HUMINT analysis relies on human sources, where identities, personal agendas, language in context, and even momentary mood affect gathered intelligence. Thus, acquiring and analyzing these data sources moves more interpretivist data-gathering and analysis methods of assessing meaning to the forefront (Nolan, 2013). These diametrically opposed epistemologies operating within the same macro context challenge collaboration and the

development of a core intelligence identity (Turner, 2004) and could enable TWB when structures and norms are not adequate to manage relationships.

The differences may also stem from perspectives on culture. Using a more interpretivist approach, (Bean, 2009b, 2012) argued that the circular and self-perpetuating nature of reform designs represents a lack of understanding about IC culture and a failure to embrace broader ways of knowing, including explorations of discursive and relational dynamics. Discourse symbolizes institutional myth, meaning (Blumer, 1969), and boundaries for change (Foucault, 1980; V. M. J. Robinson, 2013). Sensemaking occurs when novel events and accompanying social interactions drive altered identities (Weick, 1993, 1995). Thus, global events have shifted meaning and sensemaking for the IC in ways that have challenged identities, relationships, and processes (Croft, 2006) and in ways that many may find hard to decipher. Much like IC reform efforts, global events that change intelligence priorities also upend power bases through access, budgets, office space, and personnel, potentially triggering TWB when changes are poorly managed.

Dueling Meanings. The multifaceted nature of identity and meaning have trifurcated intelligence officers as perceived guardians of the country's security, as citizens and as co-victims of global events. For example, a single use of the simplistic phrase "connect the dots" on page 408 of the *9/11 Commission Report* (9/11 Commission, 2004, p. 408) has become a banner for intelligence failure and a discursive symbol among the public of IC ineptitude, negligence, or cultural misalignment (Dahl, 2013; Diamond, 2008; Gladwell, 2003). Croft (2006) argued that this new meaning has also shifted identity for the American public as both a victim recovering from harm and a collective hero who has persevered and fought back. This public identity has reflected into the collective meaning of the IC through an embedded sense of crisis, suspicion, and blame that has framed intelligence and military operations since the attacks occurred.

While Croft (2006) does not link this defensive climate to TWB, research indicates that environments framed by suspicion (K. R. Williams, 2018) and blame (Bowling & Beehr, 2006) are antecedents of the behavior. Although specific personnel and budget data on the IC are classified, former deputy director of the CIA, John McLaughlin (2016) has stated that the IC experienced a reduction in personnel of 23% during the post-Cold War 1990s, when the dissolution of the Soviet Union created a political environment supporting the shift of intelligence and military funding to other purposes (Davoodi, 1999; Gleditsch et al., 1996). However, within six months after the 9/11 attacks, the IC had received an influx of 2,000 new intelligence analysts on counterterrorism accounts alone (McLaughlin, 2016).

Although I have identified no research exploring how this transition has impacted collaborative relationships, this shift in meaning from an older IC that "won the Cold War" to a younger one after the IC "let 9/11 happen" is likely significant to the situatedness of the contemporary intelligence analyst. Today, most Cold War-era intelligence officers indoctrinated into the glory days of the IC's past are likely near or beyond retirement age. However, a 24 year old who became an analyst in 2002 and who developed a professional identity in an environment of blame and defensiveness would now be 41 years old and have significant influence on culture and meaning as either a subject-matter expert, middle-manager, or senior leader.

Several questions remain at this juncture. Do the roles of perseverance and risk as necessary artifacts of the business of intelligence moderate their relationships to TWB within the IC situation? Do individual analysts and operational personnel respond differently to peer-related TWB depending on whether the behavior occurs within the framework of co-located or matrixed team environments? How do inherent epistemological and sensemaking differences among personnel working within the various INTs influence responses to TWB, particularly inter-organizationally? Methodologically, how do researchers engage intelligence officers guided

by these different ways of knowing in such a way that a theoretical construct relatable to both can be constructed?

Collaboration and Outcomes

I have discussed the ambiguity and uncertainty inherent to intelligence production in an environment in which an intelligence officer knows she does not know everything—but what exactly she does not know, she cannot know. The diversity of resources, expertise, and capabilities applied to significant intelligence is designed to close intelligence gaps to the degree possible. However, using those resources most effectively requires a set of elements that are directly tied to traits, behaviors, and intent that, when managed poorly, can incentivize TWB. The following section will explore these elements: challenges to collaboration; the singular focus on "getting it right" and the consequences of failing; and risk aversion.

Collaboration. Intelligence officers have areas of individual responsibility but produce analysis within the bounds of teams and in collaboration with peers sharing similar responsibilities. Tirmizi (2008) identified six types of work teams: formally structured groups; task forces limited in scope and lifespan; committees around specific tasks with varying levels of organizational formality; self-managed, autonomous; and virtual. Analysts and operational personnel can simultaneously serve in multiple types of teams, making the notion of what constitutes a team fluid and situationally dependent (Strickland & Whitlock, 2016).

Cialdini (2008) argued that power within scientific organizations privileges those with the reputational status to influence alliances, structures, and discourse. However, a fault line of managed relationships runs through this dynamic. On one side of the fault, the breadth of skills, expertise, and tools brought to bear against the geopolitical environment's most challenging problems can produce groundbreaking analysis when power and other aspects of the human dynamic function well. However, complex interrelationships and inherent conflicts between collaboration and competition (Maras, 2017) can create a cannibalistic atmosphere when destructive. Expertise and experience (longevity) bestow power in a bottom-line environment

where failure harms U.S. geopolitical objectives, and possibly lives (J. Davis, 2003b), even if neither has a measurable impact on quality of intelligence outcomes (Creech, unpublished manuscript, 2010).

The 9/11 Commission (2004) found that organizational and cultural dichotomies contributed to failures to predict the attacks. Thus, the IC has created a subsystem of incentives and mandates to promote collaboration by encouraging personnel to rotate into other operational environments. This framework creates matrixed personnel who must straddle complex cultures, relationships, and requirements between their detailed locations and their home organizations (Nolan, 2013). Thus, this well-intended deployment system within the IC may create paradigms of relational powerlessness (Hodson et al., 2006) when intelligence officers feel alienated (Anjum et al., 2019) from their home offices but also marginalized (Pelletier, 2010) as the designated outsiders at their matrixed site. Effective performance management processes are key to addressing TWB (Reed, 2004). However, matrixed personnel also may not have effective redress mechanisms available to them in the deployed location. Additionally, the micro-politics of matrixed teams serve as a viral component for TWB into the meso- and macro-environments when the behavior is not addressed to support healthy collaboration.

Chasing the Bottom Line. Literature has linked outcome-centered, so-called "bottom-line" environments to multiple counterproductive behaviors. Tourish (2013) has argued that transformational leadership traits (Bass, 1990; Burns, 2007) have become overvalued and distorted, with Khurana (2002) arguing that this distortion has contributed to a conflation of toxicity with charisma. Appelbaum and Roy-Girard (2007) argued further that the emergence of TWB has redrafted organizational survival rules into a risk-averse series of "nevers"—never commit mistakes, never violate the leader's turf, never trust anyone but oneself, never act in a way that violates the leader's image of the organization, and never challenge the leader's perception of reality. A social environment in which risk-aversion is based on fear of personal

loss of standing rather than a focus on the mission may have a detrimental impact on the IC's primary function: warning.

Reduced to its most basic purpose, the IC's role is to prevent intelligence "surprise" by minimizing uncertainty about adversarial intentions, capabilities, plans, and activities (Fingar, 2011b). This role implies a responsibility not to make mistakes (Nolan, 2013). However, this singular focus frames the IC as the ultimate bottom-line environment, an operating framework that has been associated with TWB when the human element of performance is ignored (Holloway & Kusy, 2010), perceived as benign, or even as the privilege of high-producers (Lloyd, 2019).

I have documented the relationships between excessive bottom-line cultures and TWB. One study linked excessively bottom-line environment to masculinized cultures. Framed within Barrett's (1996) "masculine context culture" (MCC) of risk-taking, perseverance, and endurance, Matos et al. (2018) found that high-MCC cultures moderated the negative impact of TWB on outcomes in both genders, while low-MCC cultures did not. I have been unable to identify research into levels of perseverance and endurance among intelligence officers. However, research would suggest that their ability to function effectively in danger zones while exposed to inhumane images, data, and behavior would suggest that they embody significant resilience (L. K. Johnson & Wirtz, 2004; Nolan, 2013). The IC as a risk-focused environment is more complex and will be discussed further below.

The Matos et al. (2018) findings related to gender are worth noting. Women have led at least two of the IC's most successful (publicly documented) operations, the hunts for and capture of CIA analyst and Soviet spy, Aldrich Ames (Grimes & Vertefeuille, 2012) in the mid-1980s, and Osama bin Laden, who planned and executed the 9/11 attacks (Windrem, 2013). However, women comprised only 38.8% of the IC workforce in 2018, the latest public figures available. However, the trendline has improved from previous years, with women comprising 41.2% of all new hires that same year (*Annual Demographic Report,* 2018). As already

discussed, research has found no significant relationship between gender and the prevalence of TWB, but rather, in the behavioral tactics used by male and female toxic personalities and targets. Thus, the Matos study raises two important questions: assuming the IC can be defined as an MCC, does culture moderate the impact of TWB for female IC officers? Conversely, does the MCC culture impact tactics used by female toxic personalities within the IC such that they might mirror toxic behaviors in males?

Risk-aversion and the Bottom-Line. Literature suggests that the ability of the IC to embrace the benefits of an MCC culture to moderate the impacts of TWB would be mitigated by fissures over risk, power, and fear. Dagless (2018) argued that effective intelligence analysis requires the space to be wrong. However, Fingar (2011b) argued that the very nature of preventing intelligence surprise has built risk aversion into IC processes and the analytic psyche through demands for prevention-focused, rather than forward-leaning, analysis. As Nolan (2013) argued:

> The analysts are expected to navigate this sea of chaos with no mistakes, and since they are conscientious patriots who want to do the job well, they naturally have difficulty navigating the gap between what is expected (from others as well as themselves) and what is realistic. (p. 26)

Research indicates that excessive focus on perfectionism is associated with toxic environments through the fear of failure, humiliation, marginalization (Appelbaum & Roy-Girard, 2007; Kusy & Holloway, 2009; Pelletier, 2010), as well as feelings of being controlled, pessimism, disengagement, and minimized trust (Ciuk, 2011). In turn, TWB has been associated with reduced performance (Dunlop & Lee, 2004; Andrew A Schmidt, 2014), diminished quality (K. R. Williams, 2018), and productivity (Hubbard, 2018). The outlying question is to what degree do these responses occur among intelligence officers in toxic events and how might they influence operations?

Limitations of Intelligence Analysis

Just as competing epistemologies challenge intelligence production, perspectives on TWB and responses to the behavior might also be significantly different. However, these challenges are not limited to ambiguity and culture. Research also indicates that cognitive and operational limitations inherent to analysis challenge the business of intelligence even within the best operational climates. The following section discusses functional limitations and impediments that intelligence officers encounter, including overestimation and cognitive uncertainty, the "warning paradox," and tensions between incentives to compete and requirements to collaborate (coopetition).

Overestimation and Cognitive Uncertainty. Intelligence production lies in a paradox between the need to, but futility of, predicting human behavior with precision. While valuing scientific methods and rationally applied tradecraft (J. Davis, 2003a), critical thinking processes and scientific methods often conflict with the innovation needed in an environment of data uncertainty (Richards, 2010), compartmentalization, and unanticipated crises (Johnston, 2005). As Arkes and Kajdasz (2011) noted:

> There is an important difference between the analyst and the other professionals when an atypical situation occurs. The experienced nurse or firefighter is likely to have encountered such a situation before, allowing them to draw on experience. The experienced intelligence analyst, some might argue, is more likely to deal with a turn of world events that has no precedent. (p. 163)

Research indicates that the level of certainty within intelligence findings and the relative inferiority of U.S. adversaries depicted in popular culture are unrealized ideals. As noted earlier, intelligence failures spur reform efforts, often failing to address the social, power, discursive, and cognitive fundamentals behind failure. For example, the 9/11 Commission (2004) addressed perceived cognitive failures behind the attack by calling for institutional and collaborative restructuring. However, the commission provided no remedy for the most basic impediment associated with the inability of intelligence officers to predict the fluidity of

unprecedented human intent with any accuracy. Cognitive and methodological limitations faced by intelligence analysts in reading adversarial minds remain in place.

Heuer (1999) argued that policymakers and the public often underestimate the ambiguous nature of intelligence information, leading to overconfidence in the ability of analysts to provide meaningful probability estimates of their findings. Taking a broader theoretical stance, Arkes and Kajdasz (2011) framed this overconfidence through five, false intuitive theories:

- We can predict behavior, particularly when we believe we know a target well
- The level of confidence in a prediction is equivalent to the likelihood that it is right
- Accuracy is improved with expertise
- Accuracy is improved with a higher quantity of data
- Rapid cognition in prototypical circumstances is typically accurate.

Some scholars have argued for greater attention to structured analytic techniques and better critical thinking skills to overcome certainty (L. K. Johnson, 2015). However, Zohar (2013) argued against positivist approaches to intelligence analysis, comparing it rather to a constructivist-grounded theory method in which findings are based on an interaction between the analyst's truth, the analyst's perception of the target's truth, and data emerging out of fragmented, situated moments in time.

Warning and the Policymaker. Heuer (1999) described analysis as occurring on a spectrum in which data and theory are integrated in small segments as parts of a puzzle, which eventually leads to a picture. However, the clarity and accuracy of that picture depends on the value of the underlying data, which cannot be assessed with certainty unless the analyst has insight into the data that she is missing—in which case, the data would no longer be missing. Additionally, accurate estimates require surfacing accurate assumptions, which typically rely on comparisons to past activity (J. Davis, 2003b). However, an element of that missing data may be the key piece of the puzzle to indicate that either intentions, capabilities, or plans have

changed (Richards, 2010). Finally, accurate findings rely on defeating D&D efforts by adversaries intended to prevent access to and deceive intelligence officers about the nature of that data (Hastie, 2011).

The warning process illustrates this limitation. The primary purpose for intelligence is to provide warning, which (J. Davis, 2003b) defines as, “applying all-source information, expert insights, and specialized tradecraft to help policy officials prevent or limit damage from threats to national security” (p. 2). However, Callum (2001) argued that warning relegates analysis as either “failed” or “irrelevant,” depending on when analysis is produced. While he did not use the term, he is describing a variation on the juxtaposition between the intelligence mission and an artifact of the analytic environment, referred to as the “warning paradox” (J. Goldman, 2006).

The “warning paradox” reflects an incongruence between analytic capabilities and policymaker expectations. The greatest opportunity policymakers have for affecting adversarial behavior is at the beginning of an activity when data is least robust and uncertainty is highest. However, the analyst is less likely to be believed at this juncture because of these limitations—thus, failing. Additionally, if U.S. action early in the event cycle either intentionally or unintentionally drives a change in the adversary’s plans, the original analysis may be viewed as incorrect, even if it represented adversarial intent in that moment in time. The analyst is most likely to be believed at the end of an event cycle when data is greatest and uncertainty has diminished; however, the analyst may be deemed irrelevant at this juncture because the intelligence is no longer timely enough to affect outcomes. Thus, the warning paradox challenges the ability of analysts to produce findings that can withstand an absence of reflexivity on the temporal and spatial elements in the situation.

Scholars and IC officials have debated on how and whether to hold individual analysts accountable for intelligence failures (Bean, 2009b; Croft, 2006; Diamond, 2008; Lester, 2015). One practical impediment to individual accountability is the “many hands” nature of intelligence findings. A second practical impediment lies with common lack of “feedback” available to

analysts on many of their findings. Unlike the firefighter who receives accurate performance feedback when the fire is eliminated, analysts often never definitively learn whether they were correct (Arkes & Kajdasz, 2011). Multiple factors contribute to lack of feedback, including media disclosures that have clued adversaries into the indicators that intelligence officers rely upon (enabling adversaries to reconfigure practices) or an absence of confirming or disconfirming data, resulting from either a lack of collection or successful D&D efforts (Hastie, 2011).

Rovner (2011) argued that the ideal in which uniformly objective, data-rich intelligence arrives on the desk of a highly rational policymaker, who then makes an objective decision based on that intelligence is in contravention to reality. Intelligence officers and policymakers are not immune from the human desire for permanence (Arkes & Kajdasz, 2011) and the need to fill information gaps (Kahneman, 2011). Thus, policymaker demands for accurate probability estimates amid ambiguous or missing data can encourage analysts to reach premature conclusions. Maras (2017) argued that policymakers' demands for finite probability estimates may actually be inversely related to the level of certainty that analysts have about available data, a dynamic framed by a clash of mental models between public-opinion driven politicians (J. Davis, 2003b) and uncertainty-driven analysts (Betts, 2007).

Borrowing from Foucault's (1979) concept of governmentality, the breadth of institutional, discursive, collective, and structural arrangements within the IC form complex power arrangements designed around one set of objectives: prevent an intelligence failure. However, misalignments between institutional (Lester, 2015) and discursive (Bean, 2009b) norms, what policymakers and the public expect of intelligence officers, and what they actually can do (Betts, 2007) enhance uncertainty, risk aversion, and micro-politicization at the inter- and intra-team levels. Policymakers, members of the broader national security arena (such as the warfighter and diplomatic corps) become designated implicated actors in the situation, while the public is reduced to the role of silent actor (Clarke, 1991, 2003, 2005).

Intelligence officers and policymakers function in a situation in which their shared and separate social worlds continually interact with expectations of each other's needs, even when they are not directly communicating (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Clarke, 2005; Clarke et al., 2017). How politically charged intelligence environments impact the interaction between individual behavior and relationships may depend partially on how team members feel about "the game" (Hochwarter, 2003). This phenomenon can become internalized when fear of marginalization intrudes upon the ambiguous and collectivist frameworks for intelligence production, leading estimates to be under- or over-sold (Bar-Joseph & McDermott, 2010).[6] Thus, absent more overt forms of TWB, the environment and decision processes around politicized intelligence issues may become toxic (Maitlis & Ozcelik, 2004). The influence of this dynamic may be particularly influential within the competitive intelligence and peer review processes discussed in the next segment.

Competitive Intelligence, Peer Review, and "Coopetition." While agency requirements may differ, intelligence officers typically are assigned an account of responsibility but function as part of holistic or matrixed teams (Strickland & Whitlock, 2016). Additionally, intelligence officers approach their accounts using methods, tools, and strategies that are normative for that analyst's profession; however, personnel in other agencies may follow the same account area from their own unique vantage points (L. K. Johnson, 2015). Co-located analytic teams may be similarly diverse in skill and expertise, with teams led by SMEs, who mentor more junior personnel and non-analytic personnel supporting the analytic function.

Similar to academic research, intelligence findings undergo intra- and inter-team peer review prior to being published in order to benefit from specialization and moderate cognitive

[6] A well-publicized example of this phenomenon occurred when ex-Director of Central Intelligence George Tenet reportedly misrepresented to President George Bush that intelligence overwhelmingly supported the existence of an active weapons of mass destruction program underway in Iraq, although IC analysts were divided in their conclusions (J. Davis, 2003a). His reported use of the phrase "slam dunk" (Woodward, 2004) not only overstated conclusions, but also violated discursive norms in framing accuracy levels for policymakers.

bias through competitive analysis (Colby, 1981). Peer review is a micro-, meso-, and macro-level social process (Hastie, 2011) that can take days or months depending on the level of criticality and disagreement. The process includes the publication of competing studies or merely the opportunity to review and edit others' products before publication. This process is instrumental in establishing confidence levels (Tetlock, 2017) and surfacing alternative hypotheses that are designed to refine perceived accuracy (Johnston, 2005). A final product may have a single name. However, it has been constructed from intra-team, interagency, and individual processes that traverse structure (Archer, 2003; Blumer, 1969).

IC peer review relies upon cohesion, collegiality, and effective conflict management (Heuer, 1999). However, much like academic peer review, a process designed to get the best product inherently relies upon peers who are also competitors (Bloch, 2002; Hastie, 2011). Using structural equation modeling to measure mediating effects on competition/cooperation (coopetition) on virtual IT teams (VTs), Baruch and Lin (2012) also found that levels of shared vision, social interaction, and trust significantly mediated knowledge sharing. Team performance also relied upon emotional intelligence levels and competence. The study has some limitations in its transferability because participants represented one industry in a virtual niche. However, matrixed IC teams resemble VTs in their limited physical access between members and their reliance upon technology to communicate (Arney et al., 2004; McIntyre et al., 2009). Additionally, while research demonstrating that collaboration affects intelligence accuracy is limited due to a lack of confirming feedback, examples where failures to collaborate contributed to intelligence failures are robust (9/11 Commission, 2004; Bar-Joseph & Kruglanski, 2003; Dahl, 2013; Shlaim, 1976). However, Baruch and Lin separated knowledge sharing and performance as independent outcome variables. Nevertheless, the study raises relevant questions about the criticality of relational factors as mediators to cognition and team problem-solving in IC coopetition.

The lack of feedback can present as a wild-card variable in coopetition. The uncertainty over the accuracy of certain findings contributes to norms in which bonuses and promotions are tied to production quantities (vice accuracy) and impact, creating an incentive to produce and be the first to do so. Additionally, competition and uncertainty-driven fear of failure encourages intelligence officers to transform even minor issues into a debate (Nolan, 2013) because intelligence officers must produce duplicative and contradictory findings (Davies, 2004) while also finding consensus. Thus, the intelligence process includes a need for consensus and collegiality, but also a hostility towards it. This tension may contribute to TWB when poorly managed.

Psychological ownership of key intelligence issues may increase coopetition tensions. SMEs and senior analysts have informal status within the competitive intelligence and peer review processes due to perceived experience, expertise, and reputation (Arkes & Kajdasz, 2011). However, research indicates that expertise impedes accuracy through cross-situational misassumptions (Mischel, 1973) and the misattribution of cause and effect anchored to past events (L. K. Johnson, 2015; C. G. Lord et al., 1979). SMEs may perceive psychological ownership (Pierce et al., 1991) when favored issues become extensions of their self-concepts (Belk, 1988). Further, research has associated psychological ownership and territorialism with abuse of power (Tavanti, 2011), self-promotion at the expense of others (Dobbs & Do, 2019), and marginalizing others with TWB (Ciuk, 2011).

Emotion Management

The interaction between TWB and response to the behavior likely segues through emotional reaction for the toxic personality and the target. Emotion in the intelligence environment plays multiplicative roles in the intelligence environment. They may be a byproduct of the empathic connection or sense of ethos (Voronov & Vince, 2012) with the mission or something to be managed in emotionally laden intelligence operations (Nolan, 2013). In toxic

environments, emotions may emerge differently depending on whether one perceives that they are the target or a witness to the behavior (Pelletier, 2010).

Gilbert et al. (2012) argued that a lack of empathy is related to the prevalence of narcissism in TWB. Additionally, Appelbaum and Roy-Girard (2007) argued that feeling empathy plays a role in decisions by team members to become toxic handlers. Bowling and Beehr (2006) found moderately significant relationships between exposure to TWB and depression. Left unaddressed, TWB may emerge into a climate of toxic emotions that are recurring, disengaging, and exhausting (Chu, 2014). Thus, toxicity may raise significant implications for accurate intelligence by elevating opportunities for unhealthy emotion management.

The intelligence team environment raises important questions about what facilitates toxicity and how it impacts climate. Team climate is a function of emotion, organizational factors, and psychological states (Burke & Litwin, 1992), which aggregate into a group-level perception of the work environment (Glisson & James, 2002). Climate and emotion reciprocate within team environments through a contagion effect as a function of mimicking, biological and affective feedback, and the spread of emotion to others (Hatfield & Rapson, 1998). I identified no explorations of the role of climate within the IC.

The role of emotion in intelligence operations remains relatively unexplored. However, existing research has centered on the need for analysts to minimize it. Heuer (1999) argued that emotion management was key to accurate analysis. Nolan (2013) identified the role of emotional detachment as a psychological survival mechanism for intelligence officers exposed to troubling behavior, choices, and images, a form of self-manipulation that reveals itself in discursive ways (e.g., the target is never dead or destroyed—it is “neutralized”). Given the earlier discussion of how TWB contributed to the Yom Kippur failure and the critical role that toxic fear played in that event, this lack of research focus is curious. However, it may also be understandable when considering previous discussions related to risk aversion, uncertainty, fear of intelligence failure, and the ideal of competitive intelligence versus the potential toxic reality of

it in practice. Although it is speculative, the ideal of analysis as a solely rational exercise (Rovner, 2011) and a possible underappreciation for the role of emotion in cognitive processes (Frijda, 1986, 2004) may have contributed to this research opportunity.

The aforementioned literature indicates that positive emotions may enhance a constructive work environment, while negative emotions from TWB may threaten cohesion. Within an environment also framed by inherent uncertainty, a lack of outcome feedback, and the tensions between peer review and competition, TWB may rob intelligence officers of the psychological safety to express uncertainty and take risks, which effective intelligence requires. However, the highly rationalized operational environment in which many personnel function may raise questions about levels of whether individuals feel the safety to express even healthy levels of emotion if they perceive that doing so may violate tacit functional norms.

Summary

The IC faces macro-complexities and pressures for perfection that transcend 17 agencies, including a web of ambiguous intra- and interorganizational dynamics. Analysts and operational personnel must often work without a proverbial net to meet policymaker demands for certainty when the only things of which they are certain is that they are just not sure. Peer review relies upon the very collegiality that competition and the fragmented security clearance system resists. This complexity amid uncertainty can breed fear of failure, psychological ownership over issues and products, and political gamesmanship, all antecedents to TWB.

From multiple epistemological vantage points, the research in this section has demonstrated the degree to which this complex relational environment has been intellectualized. Scholars have explored the efficacy of cognitive, methodological, tradecraft, and structure with only a small group of researchers endeavoring to understand the cultural, relational, and emotional management influences on those processes. In fact, it is a point of irony that many scholars who have never been formally part of the IC have called for greater focus on relational and cultural factors affecting intelligence teams, while seasoned intelligence

officers approach such issues as on the periphery and as impediments to effectiveness that must be managed.

This over-intellectualized framing likely reflects the macro-identity of the IC in which differences are rationalized, emotion rules devalue things “felt,” and the only acceptable clashes are over ideas in the pursuit of accuracy. However, not only has the mythical dichotomy between cognition and emotion been debunked, research indicates that they interact as elements within a mutually reliant whole (Frijda, 1986, 2004). How individuals feel about coworkers and the organization when they are confronting TWB plays a significant role in subsequent choices. Thus, not only is the IC’s relegation of emotion and the constructiveness of relationships to backbench status futile, it may be robbing the analytic process of a key ingredient for problem-solving.

In sum, the IC has the trappings necessary for TWB, which makes the absence of research into TWB and other destructive relational frameworks in that environment more notable. However, no identified research has explored TWB within the IC, leaving a significant research opportunity open on the nature and impact of the phenomenon in an intelligence environment. Research related to a diverse array of industries, including other critical mission environments, has found the behavior to be a significant detriment to climate and outcomes. Thus, taking advantage of this relatively unexplored research line could provide more depth to the understanding that IC scholars have on what contributes to, rather than impedes, accurate intelligence. The remaining question is how to engage this opportunity in what we know about the responses to and the impact of TWB on intelligence teams. My choice of methodologies and study design for exploring this topic is the subject of Chapter 3.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

This study explored why intelligence analysts and operations personnel respond to toxic workplace behavior (TWB) and how the phenomenon affects how they function. This question fundamentally relates to individual meaning within a situation and requires methodologies designed to surface them. I used grounded theory and situational analysis as methodological tools to inject rigor and systematization into emerging theory that is grounded in qualitative data (grounded theory) and to identify the various temporal, historical, social, positional, and relational elements in situations (situational analysis). The two methodologies are related historically, temporally, and quasi-ontologically, if not in scope. Snow's (2001) warning about the futility of understanding co-constructed interaction within social action without simultaneous attention to “webs of relationships” (p. 369) validates bridging the two methods.

I considered the suitability of other methodologies. For example, I considered whether a phenomenological study would burrow more deeply into the question because of its purpose in understanding the lived experience of subjects within a particular situation (Moustakas, 1994). Similarly, I considered narrative inquiry because of its purpose in understanding the cultural, social, and identity frames of the storyteller (Lieblich et al., 1998) through the narrator’s self-interpretation (Riessman, 1993). However, I rejected both as lending a partiality to my question, which relates less to “what” than “why.” Grounded theory and situational analysis can work together to explore these questions in more breadth, even within a framework where some interpretive partiality is inevitable (Clarke, 2012).

While the two methodologies are synergistic, I address each in separate sections in this chapter for the purposes of readability. I begin each section with a discussion of their major theoretical underpinnings. Following the methodological discussion, I explain my proposed research design. Finally, I discuss ethical considerations related to my methodological choices and unique to intelligence officers as study participants.

Grounded Theory Methodology

The first section of this chapter explores grounded theory methodology. The discussion begins with a section on the origins and scope of the methodology that traverses controversies in epistemologies and the methods emerging from them. This discussion is more than a history lesson. With three grounded theory schools to understand and navigate, researchers must first ground themselves in their own epistemological and ontological underpinnings before they can know what to do. Thus, using grounded theory is a challenge before the first interview is even conducted.

The following section begins with a discussion of the origins and scope of grounded theory schools through the lens of its dueling epistemologies. Grounded theory applies rigor to collection and analysis using specific tools to ensure that the integration of qualitative data and theory is explicit. Thus, the middle section focuses on these tools, their purposes, and, where relevant, how they link to their epistemological origins. The section also includes a brief discussion of a concept steeped in controversy among grounded theorists: theoretical sensitivity. I conclude the section with a discussion of grounded theory's approach to understanding elements of the participant's broader situation.

Origins and Scope

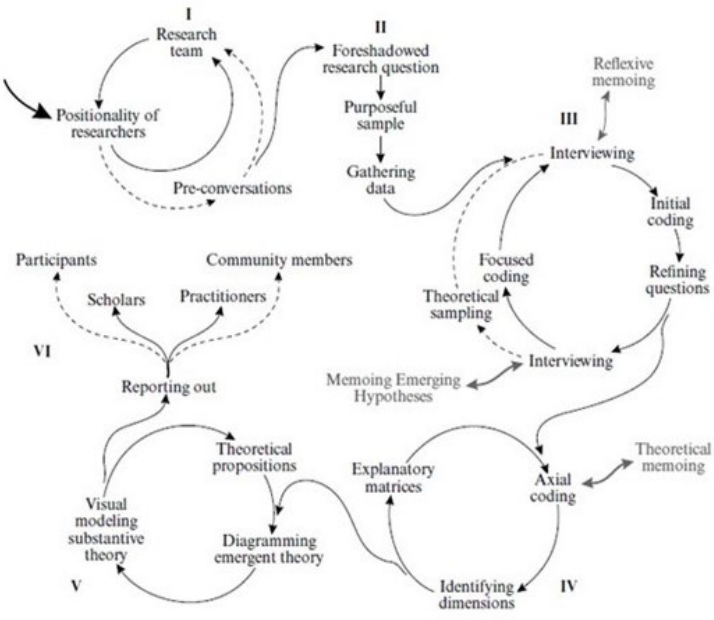
Bernie Glaser and Anselm Strauss (1965, 1967) developed grounded theory methodology unexpectedly while collaborating on a study of death and dying. Their collaboration brought together an unlikely pair of Columbia University-trained quantitative (Glaser) and University of Chicago-trained qualitative (Strauss) scholars at a time when qualitative research was attempting to muscle its way into acceptance as a mode of scientific inquiry (Stern, 2009). The collaboration would be short-lived, as fissures emerged between Glaser's positivist and Strauss's pragmatist epistemologies (Charmaz, 2009). These differences revealed dramatically different perspectives on the role of the researcher, theory development, context, and the fit between grounded theory and other disciplines (Glaser, 1992, 1998; Glaser

& Holton, 2004). The drama would be public, harsh, and create separate grounded theory identities (Charmaz & Bryant, 2010) that today have taken on a specter of tribalism.

The controversy over what legitimate grounded theory "is" has not been settled; however, everyone has seemingly withdrawn to their respective corners. Scholars have characterized the differences as an evolutionary continuum (Charmaz, 2014), a methodological spiral (Mills et al., 2006), or as a mere disagreement over procedures and the timing of steps (Walker & Myrick, 2006). I do not relitigate the controversy here. Rather, I explore grounded theory as a "family of methods" (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007, p. 11), first through a discussion of major methodological procedures common to the various perspectives, and second, within a discussion of major points of disagreement.

Figure 3.1

Holloway & Schwartz's Emergent Flow of Grounded Theory Research



Note: The dotted lines represent those instances when the researcher determines the relevance of including these activities in the research process. The greyed text represents the researcher's reflective journaling of the ongoing analytic process. The Roman numerals reference the phases of action in the research process.

Holloway, E., & Schwartz, H. (2018). Drawing from the margins: Grounded theory research design and EDI studies. In L. A. E. Booysen, R. Bendl, & K. Pringle (Eds.), *Handbook of research methods in diversity management, equality and inclusion at work* (pp. 497–529). Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar Pub., Inc. *Used by permission.*

As depicted in Figure 3.1, grounded theory methodology moves through an emergent flow of conceptualization, coding, analysis, memoing, categorizing, connecting, and theoretical sampling, with the researcher revisiting each step until no new ideas emerge (saturation) and a relevant theory of the phenomenon is constructed (Holloway & Schwartz, 2018). Both

conducting and describing grounded theory methodology is complex. Effective methodological practice requires the researcher to juxtapose the ambiguity, flexibility, and abstraction needed for innovation (Charmaz, 2008; M. L. Jones et al., 2005; Strauss, 1969) with rigor. Additionally, linear written text is feeble when attempting to describe the simultaneity and complexity of grounded theory procedures (Duchscher & Morgan, 2004).

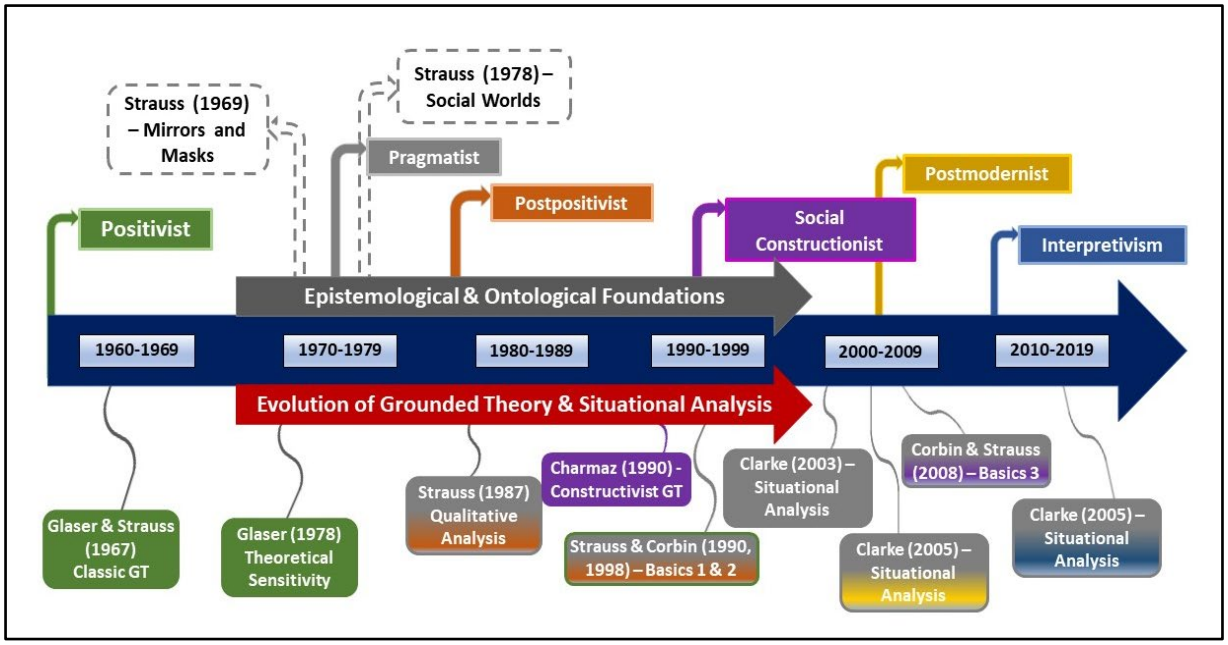
Epistemologies of Identity and Meaning. Grounded theory's history and evolution has been dynamic, if not tortured. As depicted in Figure 3.2, contemporary approaches to the methodology have branched into three overarching frameworks, each with its own epistemological and ontological anchors challenging professional relationships and practice:

- Classic (green)—Reliant upon "discovery" of theory, objective truth through abstraction, situational agnosticism, and verification by a neutral observer (Glaser, 1978, 1992, 1998; Glaser & Strauss, 1967).
- Straussian-Corbinian (orange and gray)—Reliant upon the emergence of theory, objective-but-problematized identification of truth, abstraction through meaning surfaced using structured processes, and researcher bias bracketed through acknowledgment of assumptions and guiding theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1998).
- Constructivist (purple)—Reliant upon theoretical construction, problematized reality, co-construction of meaning between participant and researcher, and embrace of researcher positionality as an element of that co-construction (Charmaz, 1990, 2000, 2006, 2014; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Corbin, 2009).

Additionally, Clarke and colleagues (2003, 2005; Clarke et al., 2017) founded situational analysis methodology as an extension of grounded theory in 2003. With roots in epistemological pragmatism (gray), Clarke has since adapted the methodology to remain relevant to postmodernism (yellow) and interpretivism (blue). I discuss the origins and methods of situational analysis in a subsequent section.

Figure 3.2

Methodological Evolution and Epistemological Origins of Grounded Theory and Situational Analysis



Methodological choices must align with one's epistemological and ontological assumptions, as well as the purpose of the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Stern, 1994). Although the purpose behind all three approaches is to develop theory of a phenomenon, grounded theorists may traverse methodological identities in doing so. For example, Strauss and Corbin moved through an epistemological flux from post-positivism to more interpretivist/constructivist approaches between their first and third editions of *Basics of Qualitative Analysis* (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Mills et al., 2006; Rieger, 2019; Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1998). However, Strauss passed away in 1996 (Dicke, 1996), two years before the 1998

edition was published. Therefore, questions remain as to how far his perspectives may have evolved prior to that publication and how much of the constructivist approach within the 2008 edition reflects his epistemological journey, given that it was published 12 years after his death. Corbin (2009) has since written about her own epistemological transition to constructivism, the nature of multiple truths, and the fluidity in how her approach to meaning and methods has transitioned.

Despite their differences, the three grounded theory frameworks have remained committed to the original conception of the methodology as a theory/methods package (Clarke, 2012) designed to understand a problem from the perspectives of those experiencing the phenomenon (Glaser, 1992). In grounded theory, meaning is constructed through iterative and interactive methods (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007; Charmaz, 2012; Strauss & Corbin, 1990) to develop “middle-range” theories grounded in data (Charmaz, 2008, p. 2). Thus, unlike narrative inquiry where story is the central unit of analysis (Lieblich et al.,1998), the method fractures and reintegrates story elements among categories as symbols of the phenomenon of interest; surfaces underlying properties, dimensions, conditions, and consequences; and seeks understanding at increasing levels of abstraction in theory development (M. L. Jones et al., 2005; Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1998).

Grounded theory’s tools to surface underlying conditions, junction points, and consequences using participant interviews (Field & Morse, 1985; Glaser & Strauss, 1967) has yielded an effective approach to understand intelligence officer response processes to TWB. However, participants diverged in what constitutes a condition of TWB, a consequence (Corbin & Strauss, 2008), and the relevance of situational factors (Atkinson et al., 2003). Thus, the foreshadowing research and interview questions in grounded theory studies are open-ended to establish a general direction while opening the space for new meaning to emerge (Charmaz, 1990; Corbin, 2009). This space allows participants to engage “voice” on their own terms (Lempert, 1996). Conversely, ceding significant control to participants requires a comfort with

ambiguity, dual modes of rationality and playfulness (K. Locke, 2007), and the ability to engage in unpredictable processes of induction, deduction, and abduction (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007) until no new meaning is emerging from the data.

Sampling and Saturation

Methods of sampling and the concept of saturation are unique to grounded theory. Much like the meaning that grounded theory is intended to surface, sampling methods are inductive and emergent; this point is an area of rare agreement by grounded theorists. However, definitions of saturation as the emergent process of exhausting new areas to sample and analyze are ambiguous and debated. The one point of agreement seems to be that a researcher must achieve saturation to develop theory. The following section reviews both methods as critical paths within the methodology.

Sampling. Unlike quantitative studies designed to answer narrowly focused research questions using samples representative of a population, grounded theory begins with purposeful samples of participants chosen because they are perceived to have experience with the phenomenon (Stern, 2009; Vogt et al., 2012). My interest was confined to response processes among intelligence analysts and operations personnel. I began with a purposeful sample of intelligence officers who I believed had experienced TWB, who could explore the problem, and to whom I had access. Also, unlike quantitative studies where all sampling decisions are made during study design, grounded theory sampling decisions continue throughout the life of the study. The researcher leverages previous participants in an “intensity sampling” (Patton, 2002, p. 243) process of following leads to enrich data and meaning.

Deeper meaning, new connections, and conceptualizations constitute the development of key categories and concepts necessary for theory development. As categories emerge, innovative ideas spur abductive leaps that ultimately narrow into abstract theory (Charmaz, 2014). Data collection and sampling terminate when no new concepts and pathways are emerging, a process referred to as saturation (Adler & Adler, 2012; Janice M. Morse, 1995).

Saturation. Grounded theory descriptions of saturation have taken on the specter of late-Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart's description of pornography: "I know it when I see it" (*Jacobellis v. Ohio*, 1964). Glaser and Strauss (1967) originally characterized this process as sampling until core categories were exhausted and nothing new emerged. Wiener (2007) defined saturation as an ambiguous judgment where no more data is needed, while M. L. Jones et al. (2005) characterized the process as a tautology where the researcher mines for data until new data provide no new data. Lincoln and Guba (1985) argued that redundancy equaled saturation. Holloway and Schwartz (2018) argued that saturation is found in theoretical conceptualization linked to emerging theory, not in discrete categories. Selden (2005) applied a discursive approach, tying it to the end of new things being said. Partington (2000) offered a processual approach where constant comparison (discussed below) of incidents gives way to the constant comparison of properties within them under a given category.

Aside from their breadth, most of these perspectives err in describing saturation of process while giving few clues on how to saturate understanding. One can reach a point at which no new concepts are emerging. Abstracting those concepts into theory is a different matter (Urquhart et al., 2010) and subsumes both process and outcome (Charmaz, 2001). In alignment with Holloway and Schwartz (2018), I reached saturation in the study when theoretical conceptualization exhausted into a definable, relevant theory of meaning and action. Saturation requires more than sensing the data. Saturation and the ability to elucidate meaning through the linkage of properties, conditions, and junction points (Hennink et al., 2016) rely upon systematic coding and analysis techniques.

Coding and Analysis

Rigorous coding of qualitative data is fundamental to grounded theory. Like the sampling that generates data, its coding is also emergent. The following section discusses the coding strategies; the role of memoing to track emergent themes, new directions, and positionalities;

the role of constant comparison; and controversies surrounding the concept of "theoretical sensitivity" in reference to the role of extant literature and preexisting knowledge.

Initial Coding. The various grounded theory paradigms use different terminology for the coding phases, often reflecting nuanced distinctions. For example, Charmaz (2000, 2006, 2014) uses the term *initial coding* to denote the first phase of data collection and analysis. Clarke, Strauss, Corbin, and Glaser (Clarke, 2012; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998) prefer the term *open coding*. I will adopt Charmaz's (2006, 2014) use of the term initial coding, which begins the researcher's relationship with the data and participants (Star, 2007). Initial coding is a process designed to explore action, process, sequence, and outcomes. The researcher immerses herself into the content by delimiting action into discrete meanings (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Meaning is betrayed by metaphor, intonation, and structure. Thus, in vivo codes of exact words and phrases illuminate situations or experiences as discursive symbols when writing the final product (Charon, 1989; Holloway & Schwartz, 2018). Adopting codes in gerund form freezes action in time and space (Glaser, 1978), places a check on earlier presumptions (Charmaz, 1990), and removes the intellectual distance between the researcher, the participant, and action (Charmaz, 2014).

Maneuvering through a morass of codes is the challenge during initial coding. I perceived that the intellectually reflective population, combined with the uniqueness of working within a secretive environment in which relational influences on operations are underexplored, would create an elevated demand for "voice" (Nolan, 2019). Therefore, I expected most participants to have "a lot to say," resulting in a significant number of codes to be analyzed line-by-line and segment-by-segment (Charmaz, 1990). I began analysis simultaneously with coding in order to grasp meaning around processes relevant to the phenomena (Glaser, 1978), although my symbolic interactionist frame accepted the interweaving of participants and my meaning into a co-constructed form. However, staying true to the methodology's systematic way

to sift, sort, and conceptualize toward abstraction was fundamental (Martin & Turner, 1986). Memos were a critical element of that process.

Memoing. In grounded theory, the term *memoing* not only demonstrates the immersive-action form of initial coding using gerunds, but also references a critical methodological tool (Birks et al., 2008). Memos link coding and writing (Charmaz, 2002a) to "create social reality for the researcher" (Richardson, 1998, p. 349). If initial coding immerses the researcher in the data and away from their own presumptions, then memoing pulls the researcher further into the distance of abstraction by stimulating conceptualization, prioritization, positionality framing, and categorization (Birks et al., 2008; Lempert, 2007).

Memos spur and are spurred by the inductive, deductive, and abductive leaps within grounded theory through questions and abstraction (Charmaz, 2014). What is happening here? Where are the gaps? What do conditional and dimensional variations mean for developing theory (Clarke, 2012)? In my study, they formed an analytical tracking system (Uwe Flick, 2018) as I contended with new directions. I had already begun memoing at the proposal stage, which had generated theoretical questions, surfaced formerly unrealized sensitizing concepts behind my study, and finalized design decisions.

Focused Coding. Focused codes synthesize and explain data on broader levels. This intermediate phase of coding reintegrates data within emerging categories, abstraction, and key situational factors. Processes revolve around more directive coding, conceptualizing, memoing, and sampling emerging categories. As codes emerge more frequently across data sets, the preponderance of initial codes should be subsumed under a smaller number of more refined and abstract focused codes interpreted through constant comparison (Charmaz, 2000).

The variable terminology that grounded theory frameworks use in this intermediate phase may confuse the nascent researcher. However, what the grid does not convey is the way in which the variations symbolize epistemological messiness as a fault line between paradigms. For example, Charmaz (2006, 2014), a constructivist, and Strauss and Corbin (1990, 1998), in

their post-positivist phase, conducted focused coding and axial coding, respectively, during the intermediate phase. While both processes were designed to categorize relationships, properties, and their dimensions, the procedures (rigid versus flexible) represent the assumptions about the researcher positionality and the role of an external “truth” that distinguish them.

Arguments also exist over which coding phase various procedures represent. Birks et al. (2008) placed Glaserian selective coding around an emerged category within the intermediate phase, while Walker and Myrick (2006) argued that the process is the final element of first-phase coding. Even accepting the Birks perspective, Glaser's (1978) use of selective coding and Strauss and Corbin’s (1990, 1998) axial coding are not only different in purpose and process—the differences reflect the core of the public dispute between the practitioners (Glaser, 1992). Finally, Strauss and Corbin (1990, 1998) used selective coding to discriminate, refine, and sample around the emerging abstracted theory in the final stage of a study. Charmaz (2000) would argue that arguments over where to place what procedure risks sapping grounded theory research of critical flexibility. Also, as implied by Holloway and Schwartz’s (2018) emergent flow of research, the arguments are untethered from the methodology in practice, which relies upon evolving (and revolving) sampling, coding, and analytic strategies as the data and emerging theory demand.

Constant Comparison. Constant comparison, in which accumulated data—code to code, category to category, participant to participant, condition to condition—leverages substantive memos to stimulate the emergence of abstract patterns. I interpreted the emergence of more centralized themes and categories throughout data collection and coding. Thus, constant comparison established the foundation for my theoretical model by sustaining data immersion, inhibiting overinterpretation, and mitigating errant linkages (Dey, 2007; Duchscher & Morgan, 2004; Stern, 2009). Interpreting linkages between categories and emerging theory occurred through a process of theoretical sensitivity.

Theoretical Sensitivity. Theoretical sensitivity is the ability to project beyond the mass of codes and categories into higher levels of abstraction. The concept is a tenant of all schools of grounded theory and fundamental to decisions on theoretical saturation (Janice M. Morse, 2004). Theoretical sensitivity is also central in debates over the roles of the researcher and prior theoretical knowledge as they constitute "what is" grounded theory. The debates have been public and raw, leading Glaser to repudiate grounded theory's links to symbolic interactionism, reject its methodological fit with other qualitative disciplines (Glaser & Holton, 2004), and question the "morality" of Straussian-Corbinian frameworks (Glaser, 1992, p. 5).

The melodrama is less important here than what the arguments say about the epistemological and ontological undercurrents between them. The divisions relate to the role of prior theoretical knowledge and how this impacts whose voice is heard in the theory. The classic grounded theorist approach relies upon objective immersion in the data and the bracketing of researcher bias away from the analytical process (Glaser, 1978). The Straussian-Corbinian approach assumes the existence of researcher bias and theoretical framing, contending that emerging theory can be scrubbed clean by form and process (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The constructivist approach assumes that reflexive co-construction of meaning between researcher and participant, along with prior knowledge, is an element of the analytical and interpretive process (Charmaz, 2007).

Dey (1999) famously argued that an open mind is not the same thing as an empty head. In fact, classicists do not argue that researchers are without bias. The pivot is over whether preconceived notions and researcher bias can be controlled. Even within their post-positivist frame, Strauss and Corbin (1990) adopted the view that prior theoretical and professional knowledge of the phenomenon under study are required to develop theoretical sensitivity. The IC is a social world with innumerable subworlds. Each contains unique norms, practices, and language that would challenge the ability of an uninitiated researcher to understand the interplay of relational factors and outcomes within the situation. Thus, my experience in intelligence was

a guidepost to spur theoretical sensitivity (Charmaz, 2002a). Without this knowledge to ignite theoretical sensitivity, I would have been left casting about, trying to abstract emerging concepts, but with nothing to navigate understanding.

Knowledge can be a lifeboat or anchor. Bowen (2006) distinguished between sensitizing concepts as general guides and definitive concepts as narrowing the field of view. The chore is knowing the difference. Thus, memoing and reflexive practices aided my theoretical sensitivity by pulling me back from the data and tracking how my thinking traversed intuition, memory, experience, and heuristics (Cutcliffe & McKenna, 1999; Kelle, 2007). In this way, prior knowledge made saturation more efficient, and better enabled me to evaluate theoretical fit with the data (Padgett, 2004).

Grounded Theory and the Situation

Chapter 2 demonstrated the complexities inherent in the IC environment. Boundaries diverged and overlapped, reflecting relationships between referents (Ashforth et al., 2016), as well as personal and professional values that may not have always aligned (Pache & Santos, 2010). Additionally, intelligence officers' professional lives are steeped in broader social, political, historical, and material conditions. While practice may originate at the micro-political level and emerge upward (Foucault, 1977), their institutionalization at the meso-level may metastasize into macro-environments and mask the exact junction points between them (Corbin & Strauss, 1996, 2008).

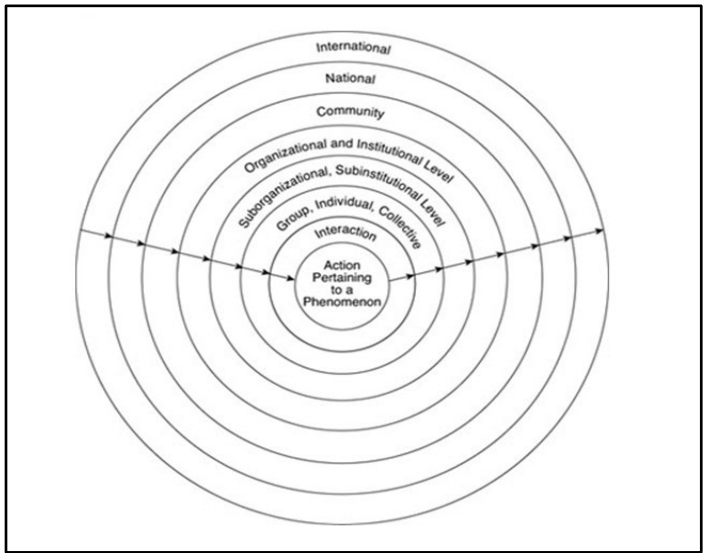
Grounded theory's systematic methods to understand participant meaning makes the methodology particularly suited to identifying action at multiple structural levels. However, the role of the situation has been controversial in grounded theory. Classicists have argued that situational factors are superfluous when theory is sufficiently abstract (Glaser, 1992; Glaser & Holton, 2004). However, Straussian-Corbinians and constructivists have recognized the partiality of developing theory without understanding the temporal, spatial, and structural elements that influence meaning (Charmaz, 2000, 2002; Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1998).

Bridging these frameworks, Corbin and Strauss (2008) rejected clear distinctions between multiple levels of social structure, mirroring the integrative and fluid constructivist approach to grasping situational influences on meaning.

Drawings and other aids act as visual memos to help researchers conceptualize and depict abstract theory (Lempert, 2007). However, depicting the location and interaction of complex situational factors at the foundation of the theory in standard two-dimensional text and visualization tools is a challenge. For instance, as demonstrated in Figure 3.3, Strauss and Corbin (1990) attempted to capture the ambiguous multilevel forces constitutive of action. However, this original, hierarchical depiction of concentric circles appeared step-wise and rigid. Therefore, it fails to capture the integrative impact as situations and individual variances longitudinally shift (Clarke, 2005). In alignment with their epistemological flux during the 1990s, they revised the conceptualization of situational elements in a spiral form, as seen in Figure 3.4 (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), which decentralized action in a more fluid depiction of conditions and consequences. However, the new depiction still did not account for time, simultaneity, value, or partialities. Situational analysis is a method uniquely positioned to capture these elements.

Figure 3.3

Strauss and Corbin's Original Conditional Matrix



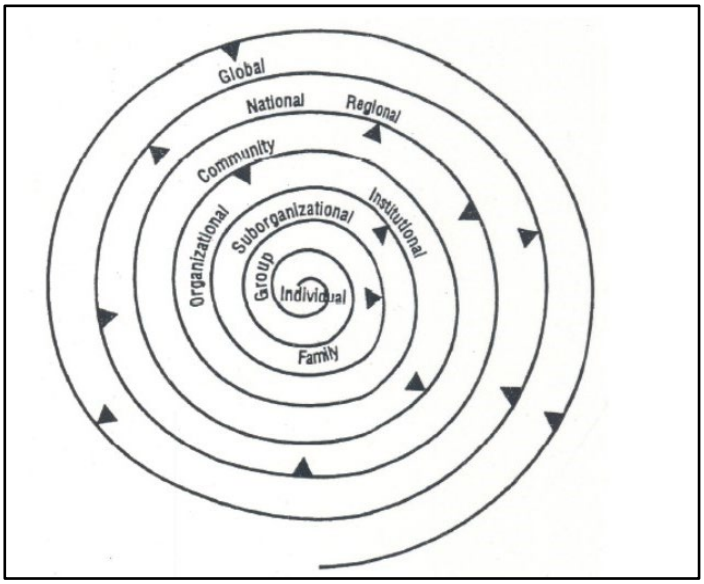
Note: Strauss, A. L., & Corbin, J. (1990). Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques (1st ed.). SAGE. *Used by permission.*

Situational Analysis Methodology

Chapter 2 explored the IC's structural complexities and the way TWB in this environment may systematize the behavior into discourse, practice, and outcomes. The previous discussion of grounded theory methodology explored its fit as a set of tools to surface meaning in relationship to TWB and the trajectory of responses that intelligence officers may have to events. However, the "why" of response is a key interest in my research. I anticipated at the outset that a set of personal, organizational, and situational factors would act as conditions to response. Grounded theory surfaced many of these elements. However, the individual meaning emergent in participant interviews also siloed my understanding of the social, relational, and situational influences remembered as part of the event. To move beyond individual meaning and add rigor to the representation of situational factors in my theory, I used situational analysis methodology.

Figure 3.4

Strauss & Corbin's Revised Conditional Matrix



Note: Strauss, A. L., & Corbin, J. (1998). Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques (2nd ed.). SAGE. *Used by permission.*

The following section explores the methodological fit that situational analysis has in relation to my research question. I begin by framing the methodological discussion through an analysis of the situatedness of response to TWB. Epistemologies as ways of knowing are not fungible from the methods used to produce that knowledge (Clarke, 2015). As with the methodological discussion on grounded theory, I next explore epistemological and ontological underpinnings of the methodology—Clarke's (2003, 2005) "root metaphors"—before turning to a

review of the method's techniques and tools. As fundamental philosophies to situational analysis, theories related to power, voice, the self, and meaning figure heavily in this section.

Root Metaphors of Situational Analysis

Epistemologies and ontologies of power, voice, and social interaction are fundamental to situational analysis methodology. As noted, Clarke (2003, 2005) has termed these underpinnings *root metaphors*. I explore the three root metaphors below: Blumer's (1969) symbolic interactionism; Foucault's (1965, 1972, 1980, 1990) conditions of power through discourse and practice; and Strauss's (1978, 1982) SWAT. As a pretext for this more methodologically refined discussion, I begin with a brief overview of scholarship related to aspects of the "self."

Self and Self-Concepts. Situated amongst late nineteenth-century and early 20th-century modernization and reform movements, James (1890) conceptualized multiple material, spiritual, and social selves engaged in an ongoing internal social process to establish roles and status (Musolf, 1992). The complex layers of the internal "self" interact with the external selves of referent groups and individuals (Cardwell, 1971). This interaction creates a "looking glass self" (Cooley, 1902) in which one's self-perception forms at least partially from how we interpret others' perceptions of us. Mead (1934) depicted this process as an internal conversation between the directive, intentional "I" and the interpretive, reflective "me." In this way, the development of the "self" is both reflexive and emergent, but also dialectical, because building one's self-concept is a tension-filled process of immersion and conflict (Gecas, 1982).

Symbolic Interactionism and the "Self." Individual meaning becomes emergent, fluid, and situational within self-concept and identity building (Strauss, 1969). Although this interaction is intrusive, it is also stabilizing as the reflexive conduit for the I-Me social process (Gecas, 1982). A presented "self" (Goffman, 1959) reflects meaning about the individual's perceived place in the world. Blumer (1969) further defined social processes between individuals and the external world as a symbolically interactive process linking the past, present, and future into one

sense of meaning. Within Blumer's symbolic interactionism, meaning was not just handed over from the past. Rather, it was handed over, reformed, integrated with other objects and situations, and returned to an external world in which it no longer resembled its original form.

Understanding this interaction is critical when exploring how intelligence officers within toxic environments respond to the dynamic. If James, Dewey, Mead, and Blumer were correct, the meaning intelligence officers ascribe to TWB does not emerge from a set of universal truths, but from the interaction between their internal conversations, perceived situations, and similar processes in others. They function within an array of referents and collectives as they collaborate, compete, produce, and present. Actions and interactions may be a group phenomenon; however, meaning as a symbol would drive individual choices in fundamentally discursive ways (Denzin, 2016) within the bounds of the situation. In this way, the delineation between micro-, meso-, and macro-processes would blur (Corbin & Strauss, 1996, 2008; Strauss, 1987) and knowledge itself would become situational (Dewey, 1909; Haraway, 1988).

Appraisals of "Self" and Self-Concepts. Two integrated aspects of self-concept are central to grounded theory methodology and symbolic interactionism. The internalized "self" is represented by "self-appraisals" and "reflected appraisals."

Self-appraisal. The "self-appraisal" most closely resembles Mead's (1934) "I" as a reflection of the traits one perceives as independent of others and situation. This element of self-concepts represents the sum of thoughts and feelings an individual may have about themselves as an object (Rosenberg, 1979). While the internalized "self 'may be referenced as representing one point in time, this time stamp is a longitudinal subset of the self-perceptions that a person may have. This subset includes what they remember about their pasts, how they see themselves in the present, and their vision for a future "self" (E. E. Jones & Gerard, 1967).

Self-concepts are the meanings one attaches to oneself (Gecas, 1982). An individual may develop an identity as a situated self-concept (Alexander & Lauderdale, 1977), which may include both public and private personas (Rhodewalt, 1986). Consequently, self-concepts are

fluid in time but also dependent on who one is interacting with in the moment. This emerging self-concept becomes a working hypothesis of the “self” because current events resembling memories of the past will integrate those experiences with the present.

Others develop identities about who we are as we also bestow identities on others. Situated identity theory postulates that experiences are encoded in the moment; however, meanings are longitudinal in that they create expectations that may carry over into future interactions with others in the social environment or in which circumstances are similar. We develop schemas about the kind of people they are. In turn, these schemas become working hypotheses of how others will behave in the future, as well as how we will feel and respond when they do (Alexander & Knight, 1971; Alexander & Rudd, 1984).

Reflected appraisals. As components of self-concepts, reflected appraisals are the theoretical offspring of Mead's (1934) and Blumer's (1969) dialogic and reflected “self” and Cooley’s (1902) theory of the “looking glass self.” Sullivan (1953) developed the term to represent the notion of “self” derived from perceptions of how others perceive us as we interact with the world (Epstein, 1973). In this way, self-concepts form through interactions between self-appraisals and reflected appraisals that challenge efforts to delineate between them.

Research on the role and value of reflected appraisals intersects with self-esteem, risk evaluation, and status. Early research showed alignment between individuals’ self-perceptions with their reflected appraisals. Reflected appraisals may also represent other self-concept domains (Shrauger & Schoeneman, 1979), such as personality dimensions, values (Olver & Mooradian, 2003; Rios Morrison & Wheeler, 2010), self-esteem, risk, and how these complex aspects of “self” interact with ethnic, gender, and other forms of identity (Watson & Barone, 1976). Therefore, our reflected appraisals may not be accurate depictions of how others actually perceive us because they cannot be distinguished from how we see ourselves (Felson, 1985).

Meaning in Social Worlds. C. S. Lewis (1955) wrote, “What you see and what you hear depends a great deal on where you are standing” (p. 125). Reflecting this concept, social

worlds theory argued that social life around fluid forms of discourse linked action, practice, and technologies. This theory was situated in the postmodern epistemological turn in the 1980s and 1990s (A. I. Goldman, 1999; Hicks, 2004). Building on Foucault's "universes of discourse," decentering of the "knowing subject" (Foucault, 1972), and Rousseau's (2016) rejection of traditional order, postmodernists sought to discredit the search for a universal truth. Concurrent with this turn, the "pragmatist school" within the University of Chicago leveraged its roots in Mead, Dewey, and Peirce's conceptualization of abduction (Joas, 1993; Peirce, 1931) to explore universalism as confined to action within communities of practice (Lorino, 2018).

Two theories of meaning within social worlds emerged within this confluence of thought. Shibutani (1955,1986) depicted a social world as a calibration tool that individuals used to align current meaning with the situation; when the two fell out of alignment, the individual recalibrated meaning to the social world. He leveraged Mead-ian and Blumer-ian thought by situating meaning in relationships and social action, rather than within an objective reality. Taking the argument further, Star (2007) referred to this confluence of individual meaning and the situation as the "between-ess of the world" (p. 90).

In a reconceptualization as social worlds/arenas theory (SWAT), Strauss (1978) built on Shibutani by reorienting social worlds theory away from individual meaning. Rather, Strauss placed the unit of analysis on action, conflict, and process as conveyances of power. Any area bound by specific beliefs, goals, and agendas created a social world that was in constant flux as subworlds formed, splintered, and ceased to exist. For Strauss, social worlds within the situation were the result of conflicts, negotiations, wins, and losses. Arenas of discourse often intersected, others were coterminous, and some interacted only by implication. Clarke (2005) argued that Strauss's (1978) conceptualization of SWAT drew on Blumer's (1958) "collective positionalities" in which social worlds emerged from the perceived collective position of adversarial groups. Within these worlds, the locus of power was betrayed by practice and structure, and by who had the power to authenticate and marginalize.

Within the context of SWAT, the existence of any set of behaviors betrays universes of discourse, structures, and those who have the power to legitimize them (Blau,1964). In turn, these authentication practices form a rationing system for marginalization and endorsement for future acts (L. A. Bell, 2016). However, individuals traverse multiple social worlds. Fluid boundaries within the situation allow action and norms within one or more social worlds to flow into others (Clarke, 1991; Strauss, 1978), giving a simultaneity to cause and effect.

This conceptualization of social worlds is relevant to the question of how intelligence officers respond to TWB. The IC is functionally ambiguous and fluid by design so that it remains nibble in response to unpredictable geopolitical events. This complexity leads to a functional reality of co-constructed, overlapping, interactive, and coterminous social worlds. Research indicates that organizational complexity and ambiguity incentivize TWB (Dagless, 2018; Hodson et al., 2006) when policies, reporting structures, and practices misalign with the need to establish order within the system (Carlock, 2013; Kusy & Holloway, 2009). Thus, without structures and discourse conducive to healthy relationships, TWB might emerge into a tacit norm within L. A. Bell's (2016) rationing system.

Blumer (1969) argued that interactions between individuals take on a "singleness" where each individual's meaning cannot be understood apart from the other. A similar gestalt effect occurs when attempting to delineate between primary and secondary social worlds in the phenomenon. Thus, attempting to extricate specific elements as conditions versus consequences within these social worlds inherently linearizes relationships that may not be possible to capture in two-dimensional form. How does the researcher follow these interrelationships to find the center of power within these social worlds?

Clarke (2003, 2005) founded situational analysis methodology as an extension of grounded theory that elevates the broader situation as the primary unit of analysis. The method explores biographical, historical, discursive, and material/nonhuman influences on common meaning and its variations by leveraging Blumer's (1969) symbolic interactionism, Foucault's

(1972, 1980) centrality of power in discourse, and Strauss's (1978) SWAT as "root metaphors" (Clarke, 2003, 2005; Clarke et al., 2017). As with grounded theory, conceptualizations of the "self" as interactive and situated (Dewey, 1909; James, 1890; Mead, 1934) are key concepts.

In segment two of this study, I used situational analysis to examine and visualize this broader participant situation. Representative of grounded theory's pragmatist wing, situational analysis methodologists reject traditional notions of context (and the use of the term *context*) as surrounding social processes; rather, social processes are constitutive of context (Clarke, 2005, 2012; Clarke et al., 2017). Situatedness reveals itself within the salient structures and conditions related to action. By identifying the variations and conditions along with how they translate into action (Vasconcelos et al., 2012), situational analysis assumes that time, space, and structure are fundamental to meaning. While grounded theory surfaced participant meaning relevant to how they responded to TWB, situational analysis identified the conditional, relational, and social elements constitutive of meaning.

The methodology uses grounded theory techniques to map decisions, junctions, and major pivots in action to support the development of maps of the phenomenon under study (Clarke et al., 2017). For example, in their study of the communication trajectory of young people experiencing long-term illnesses, Sen and Spring (2013) developed multiple "messy," relational, situational, positional, and social worlds/arenas maps, each on a continuum of refined structure and depth. Not only did these maps enable participant stories to be abstracted to broader frames, they visualized relationships and their paths of connectivity (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). The flexibility of the methodology enables researchers to use some mapping conventions and not others, as well as to develop innovative map forms unique to their studies. As is explored in Chapter 5, my study relied on unordered, ordered, and social worlds/arenas maps to convey the situation relevant to responses to TWB among intelligence officers.

Consequences at one point in time may evolve into underlying conditions of another (Corbin & Strauss, 1996). Because of this confluence, the methodology leans away from linear

causality in social processes (Dey, 2007); rather, it depicts variegated relationships at all structural levels. Additionally, although the method is more typically aligned with pragmatist/interpretivist/postmodern approaches evolving from Strauss's work in particular (Charmaz, 2014), I argue the method also complements constructivist grounded theory's need to maneuver through ambiguous levels of situatedness to construct robust theory.

Mapping Voice and Meaning Through Situational Analysis

I have explored epistemological approaches to voice, its ontologies, and how it is enacted in the intelligence environment. A return to the concept is appropriate here. Voiced representations of action within a situation are the primary representations of meaning in this study. Language is a primary way of representing social processes and conveys shifts of meaning over time (Milliken & Schreiber, 2012). However, voice is not always overt (DeHaene et al., 2010). Silence may function as a mechanism to exert power over a past situation in which the participant felt powerless. Also, some social worlds value silence over overt communication, rendering the former a method of group belonging. Even in vocal cultures, the choice of silence over overt communication may be subject-dependent (Ghorashi, 2008; Poland & Peterson, 1998) and historically or politically situated (Charmaz, 2002a).

Charmaz (2008) argued that situational analysis interweaves with grounded theory's focus on the core concept through mapping discourses, silences-as-voice, and choices. Using interviews to understand the broader situation of the phenomenon aligns with Strauss's (1978) depiction of "universes of discourse" in which groups continually evolve (Mead, 1934) within their own social worlds and in their boundaries with others. Therefore, interviews will surface meaning on participant stances and claims (Charmaz, 2008; Clarke, 2012). The roles of power and nonhuman objects, such as technology (Foucault, 1980, 1995), tacit versus intentional knowledge and practice (Dreyfus et al., 1983), and the presence of silent actors and actants (Clarke, 2007) will be key data points to situate meaning.

Tracking overt and silenced voice in participant experiences has been integral to data collection and analysis in the study. As is explored further in Chapters 4 and 5, participants represented responses through efforts to speak as a form of self-advocacy, sanctions for doing so, moments of choosing silence as forms of self-defense, and efforts by others to subjugate them to silence. Additionally, as is discussed further in Chapter 5, silence can be a form of dissent that accompanies action, representing structures and micro-systems not present in the discourse, but real nonetheless.

Research Design—Integration of Grounded Theory and Situational Analysis

As discussed, this study uses situational analysis and grounded theory as an integrative design. Chapter 5 explores the situation through a series of empirically developed maps to represent the role of situational elements affecting the phenomenon under study. Grounded theory and extant resources provided the data for mapping processes. Rather than representing only participant meaning from the grounded theory segment, the theoretical model explored in Chapter 6 will represent participant meaning of, in, and surrounding the situation.

Data Collection

Data in my study consists of two forms: participant interviews and multimodal analysis of extant data. This section discusses my data collection design. I begin with a discussion of who I recruited to participate in the study, how that population informed my research question, and the challenges associated with locating and working with them on the research. I conclude the section with a discussion of how I conducted interviews, crafted the interview questions, constructed the recruitment package, and engaged multimodal sources.

Role of Sensitizing Concepts. Sensitizing concepts may challenge research without effective mechanisms to manage them. My experience in the IC, along with my understanding of TWB models and research, have outfitted me with a set of sensitizing concepts (Blumer, 1954, 1969) related to power and voice that have guided my research. As discussed, the role of preconceived notions and prior theoretical knowledge has been a source of controversy

amongst grounded theorists (Glaser, 1978, 1992). However, Charmaz (2000) argued that sensitizing concepts aide the researcher in developing a more efficient and informed design. Rigorous coding, producing and analyzing 66 memos, and reflexivity have been primary methods to ensure that my sensitizing concepts remain grounded in the data.

Participants. I used a purposeful sample of study participants who have experienced TWB while serving as active intelligence analysts or operational personnel. As noted in Chapter 1, I hold a sensitizing concept that the experiences of my participants and guiding theory on TWB are linked to power and the situation because research in other environments has strongly indicated this relationship (e.g., Aquino & Lamertz, 2004; Carlock, 2013; Kusy & Holloway, 2009; Lian et al., 2012). My approach to purposeful sampling also aligns within Schatzman and Strauss's (1973) definition of "selective sampling" as a framework in which sampling begins with a specific theoretical frame.

My research question centers on how and why intelligence officers respond to TWB and how the behavior impacts how they function in the work environment. All members of the IC are intelligence officers, regardless of occupation. However, I have focused this study on IC professionals most acutely associated with the core mission. For the purposes of my study, I defined the term *intelligence officer* as an analyst or other operational professional supporting and critical mission operations during routine or crisis situations while a government employee of one of the 18 IC entities. Because all experiences were relayed through memories, even for ongoing events, active and inactive (e.g., retired) intelligence officers were relevant study participants.

I limited participants to those who were civil servants within the toxic situation. Although current workforce numbers are classified, declassified data between 2009 and 2013 indicated that contractors composed approximately 20% of the IC workforce during the period (Halchin, 2015; *ICD 612—Core Contract Personnel*, 2015; Nemfakos, 2013). Like their civil service colleagues, IC contractors hold critical roles within social worlds that cross team and institutional

boundaries. They inhabit a social space in which they are legally and socially subordinate to civil service team members, while also members of social worlds within the commercial firms that employ them. Thus, they inhabit an intersectionality consisting of the government arena shaped by mission and the commercial arena driven by a mixture of mission and profit. Including contractors in my study would added seemingly infinite layers of complexity as I attempted to delineate the meaning of TWB experienced in these bounded spaces. In other words, contractors would deserve their own dissertation. Confining data collection to civil servants also engaged complex social worlds and arenas, but in ways that confined them to a more manageable theoretical space.

Recruiting Among Sensitive Populations. I departed the IC in 2013 and no longer hold a security clearance. Because intelligence officers function within a semi-closed framework of security classifications, occupational sensitivities, and secure facilities, identifying and contacting potential participants presented unique challenges. I maintain social relationships with former IC colleagues. While they are private citizens and accessible through known contact information, they do not necessarily disclose their relationships to the IC through their social media accounts. Consequently, obtaining study participants required a more intentional strategy.

Intelligence officers are not included among the categories of sensitive populations in the Belmont Report (The National Commission, 1979) or the World Medical Association's guidelines for ethics in medical research (64th WMA General Assembly, 2013). However, I assessed that potential risks of harm are likely greater than other non-covered groups due to the specialized nature of the work and the damage that the individuals, their entities, and national security objectives might experience if participant identities were disclosed. Further, those of us who are no longer active maintain the same obligations to protect sources, methods, and information as when we were employed by the IC. The following recruitment strategy was designed with these sensitivities in mind.

Recruitment Strategy. The random sampling that is critical for empirical validity in quantitative studies (Vogt et al., 2012) was not appropriate for my qualitative, situational analysis/grounded theory-based study because the analysis would have gained no value from exploring the meaning of those outside of the phenomenon under study (Denzin, 2009; Holloway & Schwartz, 2018). Simply, those who have not experienced the phenomenon could provide no meaningful insight into variations and response to it. I designed a purposeful recruitment strategy to narrow the data-collection scope to intelligence officers who had experience with TWB as targets, witnesses, and/or learners. I attempted to design a sample diverse enough to ensure occupational and socio-demographical breadth while limiting recruitment to my primary interest. Appendix C includes my full recruitment letter. My selection criteria are summarized below:

- Either a current or former IC analyst, operations professional (those in occupations in direct support to intelligence production), or manager of these occupations. Retirees or former professionals were eligible if the insights related to experiences while serving in that former IC role.
- Government civilian in a component of the U.S. intelligence community during the time they experienced the behavior. Current contractor-versus-civilian status was unimportant.
- Experience with TWB in the IC while in those capacities.

I would ultimately expand the occupational scope when early analysis indicated that I had imposed unnecessary limitations on the sample. I address this dynamic in the subsequent Sample Description section.

Researchers must consider what is pragmatic and appropriate within their research during the design phase (Clarke, 2005). With nearly 25 years in the broader national security environment, the potential for valuable data among known relationships was high. The expected biasing effect associated with interviewing known relationships and environments can benefit

understanding that adds depth to the study of specialized environments. However, a study sample too heavily populated with known relationships without sufficient reflexivity may also narrow understanding toward a subset of phenomena that fails to account for broader relationships (Charmaz, 2014). I intentionally limited known relationships to an arbitrary 25% of the total sample.

I collected data from a cross-section of the IC within diverse age, gender, and ethnic groups. Although responses to TWB may or may not have a sociodemographic component, participants representing a broader array of sociodemographic social worlds might have provide more breadth to my understanding of the key question of what is “happening” (Charmaz, 2002a; Glaser, 1998). I took advantage of more wide-ranging connections through LinkedIn and other professionally based social media sites to invite a broader representation of participants into my study. I also actively targeted recruitment of African American women midway through the study to increase their representation in the sample.

Two situational elements challenged my ability to recruit participants: the sensitivity of the population and the Coronavirus Virus Disease 19 (COVID-19) pandemic emerging in late 2019 into 2020. The COVID-19 pandemic challenged recruitment because I began contacting potential subjects in the spring during the time in which intelligence officers—like the rest of the globe—were adjusting to new professional and personal operating frameworks. Trust through network “snowballing” is a necessary element to recruiting among sensitive populations (Sadler et al., 2010). My outreach consisted of three strategies:

Network Utilization. For the grounded theory portion of the study, I contacted current and former intelligence officers. I began recruitment by using friend-and-colleague networks (FCNs) from my approximately 25-year career in national security. I initiated outreach using direct messaging capabilities available through common social media platforms (discussed below) because I commonly used these methods to communicate with former colleagues. Using an Institutional Review Board (IRB)-approved text, I explained the study purpose and

procedures, invited them to participate if they had experiences that might contribute to the study's goals, and asked if they could inform others who might participate.

Snowball Sampling Recruitment. Snowballing is a purposeful sampling process that consists of using primary-, secondary-, and third-order networks to build participant samples for qualitative studies. As noted, the strategy is commonly used among qualitative researchers studying phenomena among sensitive populations (Sadler et al., 2010) or among groups for which structural boundaries challenge access to them (Browne, 2005). The method is also an efficient way to narrow recruitment to those with specialized knowledge of a phenomenon and to establish trust with participants through network cosigning (Shaghaghi et al., 2011).

Participants in my study emerged as beneficial recruitment resources for additional data collection. Participants represented nine of the 18 IC entities. Participants in the grounded theory segment recruited 10 of my 20 grounded theory participants. Two of the five situational analysis participants recruited the remaining participants in that segment. FCN members who were not study-eligible, but who had an interest in the study's findings, also assisted in recruiting. Two senior executives who did not participate recruited participants for the study from two IC entities. One FCN participant recruited three individuals from two entities. One participant outside of my FCN, who I had met through an IC social organization, participated and brought two other participants to the study. A third non-FCN associate, who was a former intelligence officer I had met through a non-IC network, participated and recruited an additional participant.

While situational analysis leans heavily upon extant data sources, interviews with individuals who could explore that multilevel ecological space surrounding and constitutive of TWB were a valuable tool. I recruited a cadre of seven participants in the study's second segment to provide perspective on the situation and to help guide further data collection. Their recruitment also followed a snowballing process in which participants played a valuable role in identifying and facilitating connections to others who might have valuable insights.

Use of Social Media. Using Facebook's Messenger platform, I contacted intelligence officers with whom I maintained ongoing social relationships. I also used LinkedIn as a recruitment site. LinkedIn is a professional networking platform designed to connect users across occupations, professional interests, and relevant content (*What Is LinkedIn and How Can I Use It?*, 2020). The site is a common networking platform for non-covert intelligence officers and unclassified intelligence-related content produced by civilian, military, and contracting personnel with a professional interest in national security issues. I began expanding my list of IC connections on the site one year before recruitment began to create a foundation for outreach during recruitment.

As a direct recruitment approach, LinkedIn was only moderately successful. I obtained one participant using this method, who recruited one additional participant. That relationship also recruited a third participant.

In addition to reaching out to individual connections, I also leveraged established LinkedIn groups focused on intelligence and national security issues, including the following:

- Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance—a closed group producing content relevant to this specialized intelligence focus area
- Intelligence and National Security Alliance—a closed group including a broad array of professionals in the intelligence and national security arenas
- The Intelligence Community—a closed group of IC stakeholders
- Intelligence and Security—a closed group of content providers on an array of intelligence-related topics.

I recruited three participants using this method.

Grounded Theory Segment Participants. Grounded theory studies commonly provide information on each participant to reveal elements of positionality in the data. Because I consider intelligence officers to be functionally sensitive, I have chosen not to provide this level of granularity in the study. Where necessary, I discuss a basic level of detail during the

discussion of the model to provide context to quotes and other data. However, to ensure anonymity, I have included neither generalized biographical information nor connections between participants and their IC. Additionally, each participant used a pseudonym.

Table 3.1 is a description of the sample. The sample was equally divided between ten self-identified females and ten self-identified males. The sociodemographic breakdown was:

- 12 Caucasians—seven females and five males
- Seven African Americans—three females and four males
- One biracial male.

While the six situational analysis participants contributed data on broader contextual and situational factors, they occasionally volunteered their own experiences with the phenomenon. Because they were not recruited for the grounded theory portion, I have not included them in the sample description in Table 3.1. However, I coded those portions of their interviews using grounded theory procedures. I included critical insights from those interviews in where appropriate. Their pseudonyms are Vickie, Lisa, Kate, Chris, Jason, and Liam. Each was a member of the senior intelligence service (SIS).

Table 3.1

Grounded Theory Segment Participant Sample

Pseudonym	Age Range	Ethnicity	Gender	Occupation
Aedan	27-32	Bi-racial	Male	Operations
Ben	45-50	African American	Male	Analysis
Celine	39-44	Caucasian	Female	Operations
Christina	39-41	African American	Female	Analysis
Dana	45-50	Caucasian	Female	Analysis
David	57+	Caucasian	Male	Operations
Eve	45-50	Caucasian	Female	Operations
Finn	27-32	Caucasian	Male	Analysis
Gwen	45-50	Caucasian	Female	Analysis
Joel	33-38	Caucasian	Male	Operations
Kelly	45-50	Caucasian	Female	Analysis
Kit	45-50	African American	Female	Analysis
Lamar	33-38	African American	Male	Analysis
Loess	57+	Caucasian	Male	Analysis
Margaret	57+	Caucasian	Female	Analysis
Maria	51-56	African American	Female	Operations
Mike	45-50	African American	Male	Analysis
Natalie	33-38	Caucasian	Female	Operations
Rico	57+	Caucasian	Male	Analysis
Zeke	51-56	African American	Male	Operations

No participants identifying as disabled or with ethnic groups except Caucasian, African American, and biracial responded to the study. Additionally, three external stakeholders with strong relationships within the IC's lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA) populations marketed the study among their connections. However, no participants who identified as LGBTQIA responded to requests for participants.

I limited age information on participants to six-year categories as another method to reduce the risk of unintentional disclosure. What constitutes "middle age" has been thrown into a state of flux as life expectancies and a growing body of research has explored the role of attitude and perception on age self-categorization (Sanderson & Scherbov, 2008). However, a slight majority of the sample fell into what is commonly considered to be "middle aged."

Therefore, age factors related to responses to TWB and whether one chose to participate in the study at all may have played a role in the research findings.

Interviews. The choice of a collection method is a purposeful exercise of integrating what the researcher seeks to know, her epistemological and ontological foundations, and the practical tensions between the researcher's ideal and what is doable (Edmondson & McManus, 2007). The dominant data source in the grounded theory segment was one-on-one participant interviews as effective tools to capture and interpret participant meaning (Charmaz, 2002a). The situational analysis segment benefited from six participant interviews and a breadth of extant sources. All but two interviews were recorded over Zoom video conferencing, with the remaining two conducted as phone interviews. Each interview was professionally transcribed. Only the audio portion and the pseudonym were available to transcribers. I was prepared to edit from the recordings any inadvertent disclosures of sensitive information prior to submitting the interviews for transcription. However, no such disclosures occurred.

***Interview Questions*.** The challenge of any qualitative study lies in remaining focused on the study's purpose without guiding stories (Chase, 1995) into an analysis more relevant to the researcher's meaning than the participant's (Meyerhoff et al., 1992). Directed questions may impose researcher meaning onto that of the participants. To give grounded theory participants maximum space to convey their own meanings behind their responses, I used the standard grounded theory practice of asking open-ended questions (Lempert, 2007; Strauss, 1969). My initial, open-ended question was: "Please tell me about your experiences with toxic workplace behavior." Follow-up questions emerged from participant comments and were emergent within the interview. Because situational analysis interviews were conducted as part of wider data-collection strategies, questions were more directive but also emergent.

Multisite/Multimodal Analysis. Data for the situational analysis segment included primary and secondary texts, recordings, and visuals as data sources for enhancing understanding of the broader situation (Clarke, 1991, 2005; Vasconcelos et al., 2012). Access

to participant journals and agency documentation were not available due to the classified nature of the work. To add breadth, I used analyses (secondary), memoirs (primary), historical accounts (secondary), and archival data (primary and secondary) of publicized intelligence events to mine for critical situational gaps presented during the interviews.

Recruitment Package. Lay definitions of toxicity can span a seemingly infinite number of situations that make a workplace uncomfortable. For example, a friend once remarked that his workplace was toxic because his supervisor would not accept any of his ideas (anonymous, personal communication, March 27, 2019). This definition of toxicity was meaningful to him but does not align with research typologies on TWB noted in Chapter 2. To maintain phenomenological coherence, my recruitment letter (Appendix C) and participant consent form (Appendix D) provided transparency about my working definitions for TWB to enable participants to make an informed decision on whether to participate and to support my effort to develop a meaningful theory.

Analysis

I conducted analysis through two primary methods: detailed coding of qualitative interviews and mapping processes. This section reviews the coding and mapping processes used in the study. While situational, relational, and social worlds maps are common in situational analysis studies, findings made unordered, ordered, and social worlds/arenas maps most relevant to the research question. I have included a description of each map from in the discussion.

Coding Interviews. Coding and analysis began with the first interview. I used coding schemes aligned with constructivist grounded theory, including the initial coding of segmenting meaning, line-by-line, and in vivo “exact words” (to capture important metaphors and discursive moments); focused codes representing emerging themes from the initial coding; and theoretical coding to integrate emerging hypotheses as focused codes begin to present possible theory (Charmaz, 2014). I used NVivo software to maintain and process codes. Finally, I enlisted a

coding team consisting of other researchers to enhance credibility of findings and to ensure emergent theory remains grounded in the data,

Unordered and Ordered Maps. Situational analysis researchers design maps early in the research process (including during the design phase) and update them throughout data collection and analysis. Throughout the process, concepts that may have seemed significant early in the study may not emerge as significant over time. I produced unordered maps at the outset of the situational analysis segment and updated them throughout the data collection and analysis. I then produced an ordered map to frame of the major human, nonhuman, and discursive elements and their relationships (Clarke, 2003, 2005; Clarke, et al., 2017).

Social Worlds/Arenas Maps. Social worlds/arenas maps are cartographic representations of the various collectives, material-technological elements, and social commitments present in a situation (Clarke & Friese, 2007). They represent the intersectionality of collective commitments and social groupings present in a situation (Vasconcelos et al., 2012) and better reflect the ambiguous distinctions between micro, meso, and macro elements than the conditional matrixes developed by Strauss & Corbin (1990, 1998). I developed a social worlds/arenas map to answer questions related to the placement of social action within broader situations. As illustrated in Chapter 5, the map addressed primary actors, social groupings, structures, and discursive formations in the situation constitutive of response to TWB. I also integrated King's (2007) “discursive repertoires” concept to represent dominant messaging in the situation among the social worlds. I discuss King’s concept more fully in Chapter 5.

Ethical Considerations

Research involving humans carries heightened responsibility for the welfare of subjects. The Belmont Report (The National Commission, 1979) establishes guidelines for research involving humans related to respect, beneficence, and preventing harm. However, even a well-intentioned interaction can result in harm toward participants when insufficient attention is given to how the information may be used, unintentional disclosure (Bold, 2012), the sensitivity of the

situation within the participant's social world (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004), and the potential for the ethical landscape to change mid-study (Josselson, 2007).

Several ethical considerations existed within the framework of my study. I addressed risks inherent in the interview processes at the informational stage through the transparency procedures already discussed. However, even using pseudonyms, audio-only transcriptions, sanitizing of transcripts for organizational and individual identifiers, and the fractured nature of grounded theory coding and analysis, a risk exists that others will recognize the participant in the disclosed events (Chase, 1995). Each participant had a five-day window to review the transcript for inaccuracies and information that might disclose their identities or that of others involved in events. They also had the opportunity to strike any comments they chose.

Intelligence officers in the study incurred a unique risk. Title 18 of the U.S. Code governs the disclosure of classified information (Title 18 U.S. Code, 1948), authority to which I remain accountable although I am no longer an active member of the IC. Under this authority, I am prevented from willfully and knowingly disclosing classified information relating to my former profession. Additionally, I am obligated to report unauthorized disclosures by others if I become aware of them. While no unauthorized disclosures occurred, each of us would have been responsible for proper handling of that event.

Summary

This chapter explained the rationale and design for my study to understand variations in response to intelligence officers, why they differ, and the impacts of those responses on how they function in the operational environment. Research in other critical mission industries has demonstrated the significance of power and situatedness as underlying factors in the phenomenon. The next chapter reviews the grounded theory findings of the study through the words, memories, and experiences related to responses to TWB among 20 intelligence officers.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH FINDINGS FOR GROUNDED THEORY SEGMENT

The primary research question for this study endeavored to identify why intelligence officers responded differently to toxic events and how those responses impacted the mission. I chose grounded theory and situational analysis as multi-methods for this study to develop a model that represented individual response and the situational factors constitutive of them. This chapter will explain the research findings of the grounded theory segment of the study. The primary mode of data collection in this segment was exploratory interviews. The findings resulted in a theoretical model based on a core dimension of *Holding Self* as a companion to the social worlds maps generated by the situational analysis segment discussed in Chapter 5.

I begin with a broad overview of the model nomenclature and structure as conceptual frameworks for the reader. Subsequent sections explore the specific model elements. Consistent with the grounded theory focus of this chapter, I center the discussion on the relationship of personal meaning of response.

Structure of the Discussion

Table 4.1 provides a matrix of the elemental terms to be discussed within this chapter. Grounded theory models are constructions of dimensions (themes of action) with conditions (influencing factors), properties (identifying elements), social processes (loci of action), and consequences (impacts; Charmaz, 1990). However, models are rarely linear. They are emergent and dynamic around a set of phenomena (Birks & Mills, 2015). The core dimension is the overarching beacon around which all elements, processes, and consequences intersect. I have defined each element below.

Core Dimension

Grounded theory is designed to develop a theoretical model of a phenomenon. The methodology is designed to identify the significant actions within that phenomenon and what influences them. Within grounded theory, dimensions are frameworks for action (Charmaz, 2007; Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1998). Thus, the core condition is the primary action or process

with which all other elements of the model intersect. The core dimension may also be viewed as the primary goal of the actor. Therefore, within my model, the core dimension is the central process around which all responses to TWB center to support.

Table 4.1

Structural Elements of Model of Holding Self

Core Dimension	Conditions	Primary Psychological Dimensions	Primary Action Dimensions	Inter-Dimension
Core Dimension	Core Conditions	Categories	Conditions	Conditions
		Properties	Processes	Processes
			Consequences	

Core Conditions

Conditions are the contextual and situational factors that catalyze a set of dimensions within a social process. In my model, core conditions are those catalyzing factors that trigger and make possible the choices and actions of response in which participants engage within the core dimension. Therefore, while primary dimensions (discussed below) have their own micro-conditions, they also function within the core conditions of the core dimension.

Primary Dimensions

Primary dimensions are loci for action within a social process. In my model, primary dimensions will function as trajectories of response to TWB. However, not all dimensions are external actions. The model includes three psychological dimensions that function as loci for cognitive work, which is then expressed through the three primary action dimensions. The psychological conditions are constructions of categories and the properties of those categories. Primary action dimensions are constructed upon conditioning factors, processes to activate them, and consequences of those actions. Dimensions are also communications processes; the

participant uses the psychological dimensions to communicate with themselves and the action dimensions to communicate with the external environment.

Inter-Dimensions

TWB is emergent, making responses longitudinal and fluid. As the model discussion will demonstrate, participants may function primarily within one dimension during the toxic events but move between two or more primary action dimensions over time. As shown in Table 4.1, two inter-dimensions functioned as transitional offramps between primary action dimensions. Each inter-dimension has a set of conditions and processes. Consequences are not silent within this inter-dimensional framework. Rather, they consist of decisions to return to a previous primary dimension or to move to a new primary dimension and are thus inherent in the conditions of those dimensions.

This next section explores a constellation of self-concepts, response, and outcomes through the words and actions of 20 individuals who have lived the model. As with any research study based on a qualitative methodology, the findings do not claim to be generalizable. Rather, the model provides a grounded foundation for future research. The following section will explore and explain the model of *Holding Self in Responding to TWB among U.S. Intelligence Officers.*

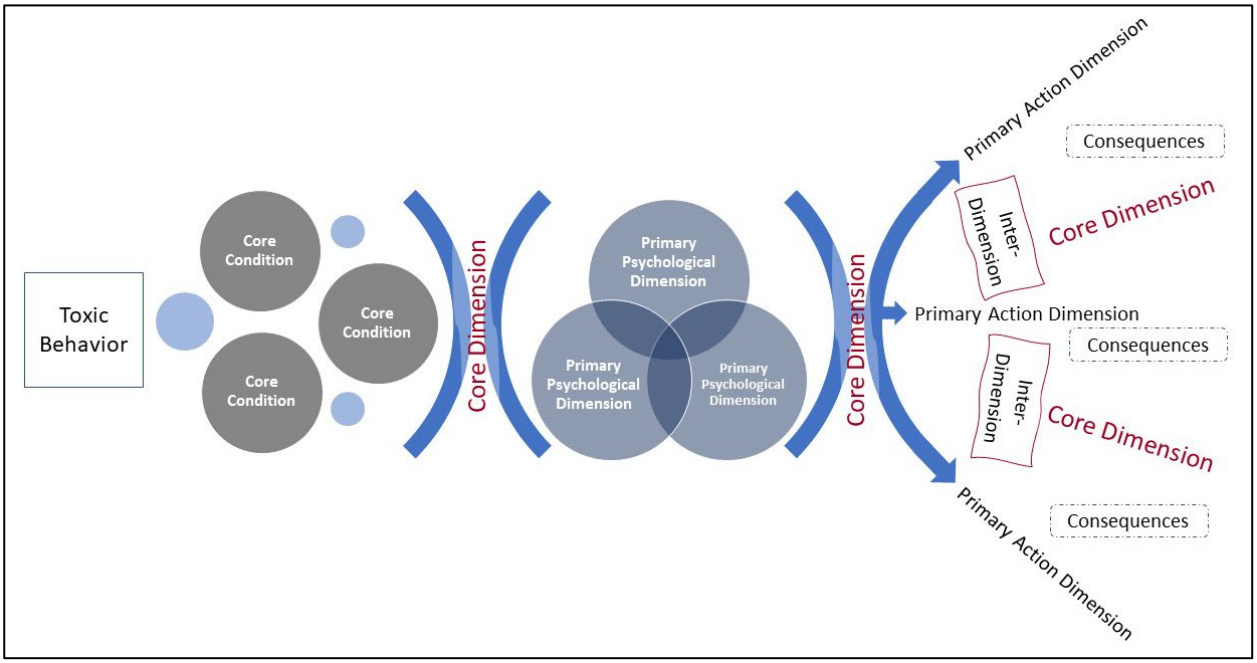
The Flow of the Model Discussion

My goal to understand response to TWB centers the inquiry on the complexities of human nature. My primary outcome in the study is to produce a theoretical model of response. Figure 4.1 establishes the main elements explored in the forthcoming discussion and how they relate with one another. The model begins with TWB as the instigating factor. Core conditions are the central elements influencing response throughout the toxic dynamic. The core dimension is the primary range of behaviors around which all of choices and actions pivot. Primary psychological dimensions are the cognitive work of assessing choices and possibilities. Primary action dimensions are these choices projected upon the external environment. Inter-

dimensions facilitate movement between the primary dimensions. Consequences are the outcomes of choices for how to respond to TWB.

Figure 4.1

Conceptual Flow of Holding Self in Response to TWB Among U.S. Intelligence Officers



The Core Dimension—Holding Self

The transition from "what" to "why" falls upon dimensions of social life (Katz, 2002). My foreshadowing research question is why intelligence officers respond to TWB in different ways and how those responses affect how they function in the workplace. For the 20 grounded theory participants in my study, toxic events challenged self-concepts. Thus, responses pivoted around a core dimension of *Holding Self* processes to solidify self-concepts. Participants first established relationships between TWB and the "self" by naming or describing what that "self" was and was not:

> Your good performers, part of the layer that goes in is their self. (Gwen)
>
> You are not your profession. (Lamar)

How these intelligence officers responded to the dynamic centered around tactics and strategies to hold onto that sense of "self", which consisted of cognitive work: As one participant related, "I always have to reframe how I approach things. 'Okay, this project didn't work so well'" (Kelly). However, the core dimension of *Holding Self* did not emerge within a toxic vacuum. A core set of conditions—some unique to the IC environment, some elements of human behavior—catalyzed the interaction between the behavior and the participant's efforts to hold "self" as a response to TWB. Some grounded theory studies explore dimensions for action prior to discussing these core conditions. However, I have chosen to discuss core conditions of *Holding Self* first to facilitate a better understanding of what influences the eight primary dimensions when they are explored later in the study. The next section discusses the core conditions of *Holding Self* in the words of intelligence officers who have experienced TWB in the intelligence environment.

Table 4.2

Core Conditions, Categories, & Properties of Holding Self Amid TWB

Core Dimension	Core Condition	Properties	Sub-Properties
Holding Self	If You Weren't Paying Attention	Who They Are	
		He Had Fans	
		Silence	Arctic
			Badmouths & Backdoors
			Like a Private
	I Felt	Onset Emotions	
		Feeling as Meaning	Worst Fears
			Stress, Exhaustion, & Agitation
			Non-Person
	Upside Down	Everything Stopped	
		Just So Wrong	
		Shifts	

Core Conditions of Holding Self

Within grounded theory methodology, conditions are factors in the environment that catalyze the phenomenon under study. Core conditions are central in the dynamic and permeate each level of the model. In this study, core conditions acted as prisms through which participants viewed work behaviors. Categories and properties of conditions acted as fractals in these prisms, which shaped perceptions of TWB and catalyzed responses. Table 4.2 includes a matrix of the core conditions of *Holding Self Amid TWB:* Table 4.2 includes a matrix of the core conditions of Holding Self Amid TWB: "If You Weren't Paying

Attention," "I Felt," and "Upside Down." The table also include categories and properties for each. The following section will discuss each core condition and its properties. I include a graphical inset within each subsection to assist the reader and illustrate the relationships between conditions, categories, and properties.

Core Condition: If You Weren't Paying Attention

As conditions of *Holding* Self, participants described typologies of overt bullying and passively hostile behaviors consistent with typologies of TWB discussed in Chapter 2. Targets identified TWB through its impact, which contributed to individualized definitions:

> Individuals with narcissistic behavior, jealously, bigotry, and those individuals which are directed by a political agenda. (Aedan)

> Micromanagement, flippant comments or rude, antagonistic statements made almost daily in some cases. (Christina)

Core conditions of *Holding Self* emerged from a confluence of the participant's individual needs, institutional boundaries, and the broader environment. However, the preponderance of the experiences aligned with passive hostility that one might not recognize "If You Weren't Paying Attention":

> If you weren't paying attention to what was going on, then you wouldn't know because she was very good at covering. (Christina)

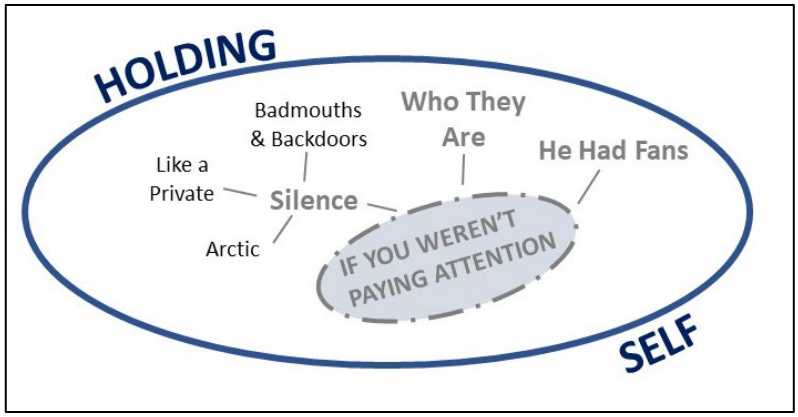
> He really wrote some long emails using as much passive aggressive language as he could. (Finn)

The interpretive nature of passive TWB challenged intelligence officers through three complex categories of the core condition illustrated in Figure 4.2: "Who They Are," "He Had Fans," and "Silence." One category, "Silence," had three properties that reflected critical nuances: being subjected to others' "Arctic" silent treatments; the subjugated silence of unseen subterfuge through "Badmouths and Backdoors"; and a second form of subjugated silence in being framed as "Like a Private." This remainder of this section will discuss these categories and properties.

Category of Who They Are. Intelligence officers interpreted differently whether behaviors or environments were toxic based on how significant the toxic personality was in their goals. Therefore, the same behaviors originating from superiors and peers might be interpreted as more or less toxic depending on the expectations for trust and power that the participant had for that person. In this context of relational significance, toxic leadership with its less ambiguous span of control was no more destructive than toxic peer relationships.

Figure 4.2

Core Condition, Categories, & Properties—If You Weren't Paying Attention



The span of control from formal power reflected the toxicity of abusive supervisors for some:

> I've had relatively few experiences, especially in the last 15 or 18 years of my career, where I've worked in a toxic environment with peers. I've always wanted to be in leadership. There's only so hard I believe you can push back at power and authority where I could shove . . . back at a peer group and not necessarily have to worry about the consequences for stopping bad behavior. (Gwen)

For others, the impact of team trust elevated the significance of toxic peers:

> I think just given the way that I operate, it's easier for me to deal with a supervisor that's creating that environment rather than a teammate. With teammates, I feel like there's supposed to be some level of trust, camaraderie, working together and so forth. (Jason)

Thus, typologies of behavior identified in prior studies do not apply outside of the relational power between the two people. Critically, that perception of relational power may be perceived differently between the individuals and may problematize identifying toxicity outside of what each expects from the relationship. Therefore, rank and position became functionally impotent when relationships with subordinates took on outsized influence over other relationships and outcomes. The following passage from Finn, a manager, in relationship to toxic team leads frames this dynamic:

> I didn't have the opportunity to speak face-to-face [to] people. Team members were getting their very best communication from their team leads who are there face-to-face with them all the time. The team leads would promote on their teams the idea that management didn't really care about them, that management did not have their best interests at heart. Really divisive behavior (Finn)

Equally important, toxic events stabilized the relational dynamic between intelligence officers longitudinally despite career movements, postings, and return engagements with each other.

> I hadn't had to work with him since he was my team lead, when I forgot about how that person operates. Several promotions later, I'm sitting here, like, 'Oh God, this organization has created a monster.' (Christina)

Or, as Liam stated even more succinctly:

> What if she comes back and is above me, or whatever is *viewed* above me? (Liam)

This hierarchical agnosticism in favor of "Who They Are" was instrumental in the evolution of my research question from one solely focused on responses to peer-related TWB to one in which I explored variations of toxic power across relational variations. As such, participants revalidated the power underpinnings of TWB, but in a way that stripped away the artificiality of wiring diagrams, positions, or loyalty. The relationship was tantamount to a third partner in the dynamic. The next property of "He Had Fans" suggests that participants not only assessed TWB in relation to their own relationship with the toxic personality. They also assessed the behavior through the lens of the toxic personality's relationships with others.

Category of He Had Fans. Overt and passive TWB were each destructive to team cohesion, mission focus, and organizational commitment. However, participants framed passive hostility as particularly destructive because its interpretive nature shifted the burden to targets to justify its existence and impact, even when the toxic personality was more junior:

> My boss's boss was a fan of this person, and I had to convince that person. (Ben)

> This man who was junior to me seemed to have so much more cache. (Margaret)

Toxic personalities commonly are among an organization's higher performers and effectively contextualize (manage up) their behavior (Kusy & Holloway, 2009). Thus, "He Had Fans" emerged into a micro-phenomenon in which participants struggled for power with the

toxic personality. This power imbalance challenged participants in their abilities to hold “self” as high performers and integral to the mission in their own rights.

Category of Silence. “Silence” in the intelligence context emerged through three properties, which functioned as a weapon and as a threat to collaboration and sharing. “Arctic” represented silent treatments, which challenged participants’ abilities to function as in the collaboration-forward intelligence environment. “Badmouths and Backdoors” emerged in the form of shadowed conversations, plans, and power. “Like a Private” diminished participant voices by diminishing them as individuals. Each of these properties are discussed below.

***Property of Arctic*.** As the term implies, “Arctic” was an environment of cold isolation in which team members, team leads, and senior analysts used the power of silence to marginalize them and others:

> No one called me a snitch. That's just, you know, the rules of engagement in the office. But, oh, I would say that the working environment became arctic. (Christina)
>
> He wouldn't talk to me for about six months. (Celine)

In this framework, silence was a passive weapon of control and marginalization. Lack of communication became a way of informing the target and others in the environment about the target’s relative lack of worth and the cost of challenging the toxic personality’s power. In the collaboration-focused IC, “Arctic” environments denied targets analytic currency. In the following property, silence took on overt properties in the form of “Badmouths and Backdoors.”

***Property of Badmouths and Backdoors*.** The second property of “Silence” manifested itself two ways. “Badmouths” referenced an environment of airing grievances away from the target, often in the operational shadows. IC environments are commonly mixtures of government civilian, contract, and uniformed personnel. Eve argued that passive forms of confrontation-turned-toxic emerged more among civilian team members in her workplace than among other groups:

> They did it in a much more passive way. People would verbally bash other people behind their backs. (Eve)

Participants also framed passive TWB through “Backdoors” in the form of subterfuge and gamesmanship. As weapons of silence, backdoors hid “truths” and agendas, destroyed transparency, and diminished targets to those “in the know.” However, relative levels of formal power between the toxic personality and target seemed unimportant in the data with both groups engaging in the behavior:

> I kept just getting passive-aggressive roadblocks, but I didn't really want to see it that way. I was like, "Oh, they don't like this, so I'll modify it and keep trying.” So just after enough of those disconnects, I just had to conclude that it was intentional. (Natalie)

Supervisors also contended with “Backdoors” in which subordinates attempted to remain on the right side of power by communicating directly with leaders, who used them to undermine identified processes:

> People would send her texts at night or emails. She would act on them the next day, whether they were true, whether they were rumors. It caused a lot of problems in the workforce because nobody knew what the right pathway was to share and communicate information. (David)

“Badmouths and Backdoors” constructed environments in which participants felt implicated by unheard conversations and unseen plans. Like “He Had Fans” and “Artic” they were interpretive, easily excused, and convenient frameworks for leaders and institutions to avoid holding toxic personalities accountable. Another property of “Silence,” referred to as “Like a Private,” used subjugated silence to subordinate targets.

Property of Like a Private. “Like a Private” constructed an environment in which petty incivilities functioned to reduce participant voice, self-advocacy, and value. Rather than overt bullying behavior, “Like a Private” reflected condescension and using humor to diminish as mechanisms to stratify voices in the toxic environment between those who were valued and those who were not:

> I come to this place, and it’s like I'm a private [in the Army] or something. [He] was ridiculously condescending to me. (Eve)

> He never really raised his voice at me, but he'd be condescending to me. (Zeke)

Humor was a disarming and interpretive form of incivility that often was directed at an intelligence officer's social arena rather than directly at the individual.

> Another [senior analyst] I worked with . . . kind of said that [redacted] analysts are like mushrooms. They just sit in the dark and eat shit. (Kit)

The way the behavior followed a circuitous route to land on the target blunted participants' sense of self-efficacy to respond when the toxic personality could claim the comment was only in fun.

Summary. The previous discussion of "If You Weren't Paying Attention" has delineated its properties to provide a granular understanding on what each one entails. Constructing the discussion in elemental form was necessary to explain each property fully. However, the discussion has also fractured a dynamic experience in which the various properties interacted and intersected to catalyze a series of responses. Kelly's framing of her experience with TWB provides cohesion to the discussion by demonstrating how multiple conditions and properties interrelate:

> I had another individual . . . who just talked over the top of us [*Like a Private*]. He was talking about [events occurring] decades ago with what that country was doing. And, then I'd get back to the analyst, but he would complain about me [*Badmouths and Backdoors*] because I didn't stroke his ego—"Oh, you're so wonderful and thanks for all your input." I was asked to then apologize to that guy because he felt like I was being adversarial to him. I told my boss, "No way. I am not apologizing to him." Then, I gave my boss an example of where he was standing there when something like this happened [to me]. He and this other [redacted] didn't even notice that this guy said something snippy to me. I was like, "There's no way I'm apologizing to him." So, I just constantly felt like I was on the defensive [*He Had Fans*]. (Kelly)

Thus, "If You Weren't Paying Attention" was an interactive toxic whole. Central to those elements as conditions of the *Holding Self* core dimension was how those interactions made the participants feel about themselves, others in the environment, and their relationships to the mission. The next section, "I Felt . . .," discusses a second core condition of *Holding Self*.

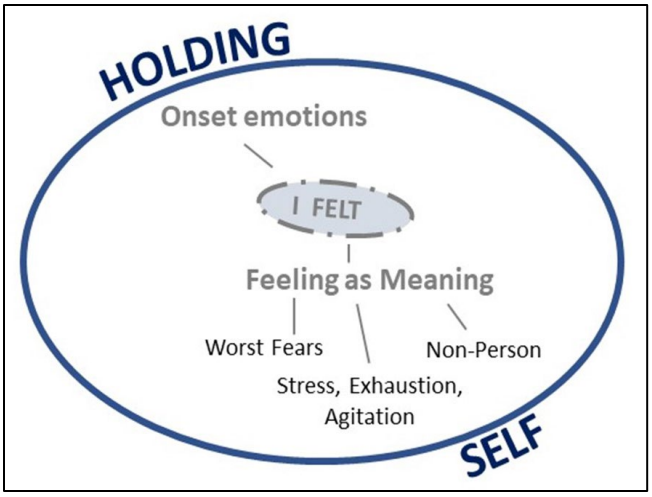
Core Condition: I Felt . . .

Emotion and feelings were integral to responses to TWB among the participants. However, the actual emotions and feelings were unavailable in the data because events and

participant responses consisted of memories. This remembered nature of the data also applied to ongoing events because representations were memories by the time they were relayed to me. Therefore, emotions and feelings manifested within a core condition of "I Felt . . ." as interpretations of remembered moments, responses, cognitive work, meaning making, and feeling as action. As depicted in Figure 4.3, the core condition "I Felt" consisted of two categories: "Onset Emotions" and "Feeling as Meaning." "Feeling as Meaning" was further divided into three properties: "Worst Fears," "Stress, Exhaustion, and Agitation," and "Non-Person."

Figure 4.3

Core Condition and Properties—I Felt



Category of Onset Emotions. Participants represented onset emotions as pivotal moments in toxic events. The findings paralleled prior literature on emotive response to toxicity in other industries (see Bloch, 2002; De Jordy & Barrett, 2014) in that the manner in which participants articulated emotions varied by individual. However, onset emotions generally existed on a spectrum of four elements, such as shock and disbelief:

> I was a little shocked and in disbelief. (Ben)
>
> I was shocked. (Celine)

Sadness:

> Heartbreaking. Heartbreaking. (Maria)
>
> Sad. (Lamar)

Anger:

> I was livid. (Kelly)

> Furious. (Lamar)

And physical assault:

> I felt like I was suffocating and being electrocuted at the same time. (Margaret)
>
> It felt like a purposeful slap in the face, repeatedly. (Dana)
>
> It was soul crushing. (Kit)

Emotive memories jolted intelligence officers into an awareness that the environment had shifted. Thus, they reflected these emotions as authentic to the moment and without the self-judgment of analyzing how they "felt about" those feelings in retrospect. This cognitive work related to meaning making, judging, and sustaining would be an element of the next property of "I Felt . . .": "Feeling as Meaning."

Category of Feeling as Meaning. The systemic and sustained nature of TWB transforms survival strategies into longitudinal processes. Participants in the study described coping strategies in interaction with shifting emotions, meaning, their relationships to their workplace (both the people and the mission), and their self-concepts. Thus, "Feeling as Meaning" followed onset of emotions as sustained perspectives on "self" and agency:

Property of Worst Fears. Participants described shifts in which their workplaces suddenly seemed threatening. Many described meaning transformation in which anger, sadness, and physical assault transitioned to sustained periods of siege and hostility:

> I was just backed into a corner, like somebody's worst fears. (Eve)
>
> It places me in a corner, it makes me feel threatened. (Mike)

However, the threat became bidirectional as they perceived others now saw them as the threat.

> Well, it felt as if it I was . . . an unnecessary threat to my counterpart, as well as my team lead and senior analyst. (Christina)

Thus, "Worst Fears" placed targets into dynamics in which they feared being blamed for their own victimization. Over time, the emotional dynamic became psychologically and physically taxing as depicted in the next property: "Stress, Exhaustion, and Agitation."

Property of Stress, Exhaustion & Agitation. Participants also described sustained periods of stress, exhaustion, and agitation as heightened states of siege. These felt responses were represented emotively and physically:

> So, that did cause a lot of stress for me as I had to handle that because I know what was at stake. (Aedan)

> People were behaving in a hostile way and that that put a lot of stress on me. (Finn)

> [I was] agitated all the time by the environment. (Christina)

Property of Non-Person*.* "Feeling as Meaning" linked to the meaning of the "self" among these intelligence officers through a sense of voicelessness, powerlessness, and defeat. They had become invisible:

> I felt like I had no voice. My pain wasn't relevant. I'm a non-person here. Got it. (Margaret)

> I felt powerless. (Rico)

The challenge of being a "non-person" was not in the singular disregard. Rather, ceasing to exist as a property of "Feeling as Meaning" gained its power through a comparison of "selves" across time and space. The toxic personality or personalities in the environment existed in ways that the target did not. This comparison process evolved into sense of isolation:

> For a period of time, I had made an effort to be more personable, and likable, and warm. It took me many, many years, and an assignment in another organization for me to recover myself, and again show who I am again and be open about it. (Gwen)

For some participants, "Feeling as Meaning" ended on a trajectory of blame and self-judgment:

> I felt dumb. I never saw the writing on the wall. I had been completely bamboozled. (David)

> It then made me feel as if it was my fault that we were in this situation to begin with. (Mike)

Summary. A foundational concept in grounded theory is the role that consequences play as conditions for the next set of responses to a phenomenon. Thus, as conditions, "If You Weren't Paying Attention" and "I Felt . . ." transitioned into consequences for self-concepts and

relationships as meaning evolved. However, those conditions emerged as core conditions of *Holding Self* because they played a navigational role in enabling participants to see TWB as antithetical to a positive work environment. “Upside Down,” a third core condition of *Holding Self,* also played a role in this meaning making through an unconstructive disorientation of normalcy.

Core Condition: Upside-Down

As noted in Chapter 2, TWB has three victims: targets, witnesses, and learners. Intelligence officers participating in the study related experiences within each of the three frameworks. However, my study adds to that research by identifying a core condition of “Upside-Down,” in which participants confronted onset moments of disorientation within those identities that challenged self-concepts so that how they perceived their workplaces and their “place” within them upended. This disorientation catalyzed an unconstructive dynamic in which participants described suddenly perceiving teams, supervisors, and cultures as perverse.

The name for the condition, “Upside Down,” derived from Margaret’s depiction of her moment, when as a government civilian intelligence officer, she realized that her leadership was targeting her because she filed a formal complaint against the favored contractor who was sexually harassing her:

> Like I was in crazy world. It was a poisonous, upside-down environment where black was white, and I just didn't . . . the pieces didn't fit together. (Margaret)

Relating these “upside down” moments during the interviews revealed a time dynamic of shifting between past and present with memories taking on the power of something still ongoing:

> I felt like I had wandered onto a different planet because that was not what I knew of how this agency behaved. I'm trying to be honest, I'm letting people know where . . . and you see another set of behaviors that you're not exactly sure about. (David)

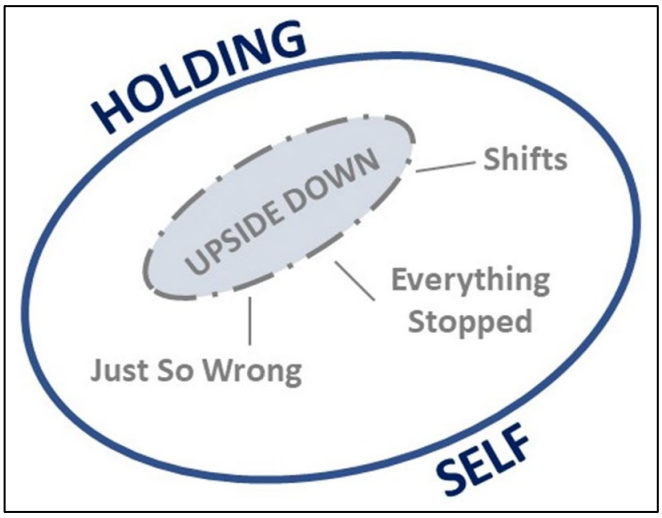
As depicted in Figure 4.4, “Upside Down” consisted of three categories: “Everything Stopped,” “Just So Wrong,” and “Shifts.” Each category is explored below.

Category of Everything Stopped. "Upside down" moments surfaced self-concepts in vivid form as the self-appraisals, reflected appraisals, and values held by participants no longer neatly fit. Instead, disorientation became a mindset in which anything was possible:

> Everything stopped for a few seconds. I don't really know how else to explain it. (Celine)

Figure 4.4

Core Condition and Properties—Upside Down



Research indicates that shock is an intermediary state between unexpected social exclusion or rejection events and more longitudinal emotional responses (Bernstein & Claypool, 2012a, 2012b; DeWall et al., 2009). Celine's use of the term "shock" to describe witnessing TWB directed at an African American coworker reflected moments of shifting realities away from old beliefs about what was appropriate at work. *Holding Self* in these moments required that she rehome her values into a work environment incongruent with her personal values. Further, this rehoming process would exile her to an awareness that, while this new environment was upside down to her, that same environment was right side up for marginalized coworkers.

Category of Just So Wrong. The core condition of "Upside Down" was a moment of sensemaking in which participants reconciled what they believed "should" be in their work environments with what was. These moments of denial and disappointment manifested within the property of "Just So Wrong":

> It was just so wrong from the beginning. (Natalie)

However, these moments also recalibrated expectations:

> Once that happened, I knew exactly what I was dealing with. (Ben)

This sensemaking reaction was particularly acute among late-career intelligence officers who felt vested, not only in their organization, but in a set of norms:

> I thought, “It doesn't have to be this way.” (Rico)

“Just So Wrong” came at a cost as participants expressed a sense of being unmoored in formerly respected work environments. In these moments, a sense of belonging in the organization gave way to feelings of alienation and being unprepared:

> It was not something I really was well prepared for. It's just not the organization I experienced for 14 years. (David)

> He made a reference towards, “Do you like fried chicken and watermelon?” I was, like, what do I even have to do? (Mike)

Category of Shifts. “Upside Down” moments culminated into events in which participants sensed changes in their perspectives on their positions in their organizations, as mentors, or in some cases, in the IC. However, they also viewed their own pasts differently:

> It was a point where I made a conscious decision to almost step away from looking at things through my lens but try and also look at how different things were affecting and impacting different people? (Celine)

> And they would say, "Did you get this?" It made me think more retrospectively, "Yeah, I get that a lot.” I didn't fully absorb it at the time. (Maria)

Shifts were fluid, which gave them an elastic power over how these intelligence officers perceived themselves and others in the toxic environment because who toxic personalities *were* could no longer be unseen:

> Once I’ve seen who you are . . . (Ben)

Summary. As core conditions, “If You Weren’t Paying Attention,” “I Felt,” and “Upside Down” catalyzed how intelligence officers responded to TWB. Each condition intersected with some aspect of relationships—either the human beings inhabiting them, or the integral role relationships play in mission accomplishment in the IC. As already discussed in Chapter 2, relationships in the form of teams, customers, and stakeholders are inseparable from the nature of being an intelligence officer. Because they are reflective of the “self” and functional tools in

support of the mission, they are inextricably linked with *Holding Self* in that environment. *Holding Self* is an action framework for response. To understand intelligence officer responses to TWB, one must first decipher potential action frameworks and how they impact the intelligence environment. These action frameworks are the subject of the next section on the primary dimensions of *Holding Self*.

Primary Dimensions of Holding Self

Dimensions establish ranges for variation among a category's properties (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In this study, dimensions are loci for conditions, processes, and consequences for responses to TWB and mechanisms for acting on choices. As depicted in Table 4.3, *Holding Self* consisted of six primary dimensions divided into three psychological and three action dimensions. Additionally, two inter-dimensions form pathways between the three action dimensions.

Table 4.3

Primary Psychological, Action, and Inter-Dimensions of Holding Self

Core Dimension	Core Condition	Primary Psychological Dimension	Primary Action Dimension	Action Inter-Dimensions
Holding Self	If You Weren't Paying Attention	Who I Am	Seeking Subliminal	Seeking-Folding
	I Felt	Who & What I Know	Folding In	
	Upside Down	What I Can	Reinforcing Style	Folding-Reinforcing

The primary psychological dimensions of *Holding Self* are frameworks in which the intelligence officer's experiences with TWB interact with notions of the "self":

- **Who I Am**: The progression of claiming self-concepts through self-appraisals, reflected appraisals, and personal values as forms of "believed" selves.
- **Who and What I Know:** The identification of networks and social relationships instrumental to managing toxic events.

- **What I Can**: Claims of the ability to affect their circumstances (agency).

Three primary action dimensions of *Holding Self* function as the expression of the psychological dimensions onto the external environment.

- **Seeking Subliminal:** Strategies and tactics to manage toxic events in ways least disruptive to the participant's performance, and possibly, to leverage the behavior into enhanced opportunities to sustain the mission.
- **Folding In**: Strategies and tactics in which damaged self-concepts contributed to decisions to withdraw from others in the environment so that their contributions to the mission were diminished.
- **Reinforcing Style:** Strategies and tactics in which participants imposed self-concepts in ways that disengaged them from the mission.

TWB is a longitudinal phenomenon in which actors may change strategies and tactics over time. Two inter-dimensions represent intersections between the primary action dimensions:

- **Seeking-Folding:** A bidirectional pathway for movement between "Seeking Subliminal" and "Folding In."
- **Folding-Reinforcing:** A bidirectional pathway for movement between "Folding In" and "Reinforcing Style."

I have identified no inter-dimension directly linking "Seeking Subliminal" and "Reinforcing Style" because no data emerged indicating that participants moved between them without passing through "Folding In." This finding is not surprising. The maneuverability inherent to "Seeking Subliminal" and the steadfast rigidity of "Reinforcing Style" are opposite and incompatible mental frameworks. I will begin the discussion with the primary psychological dimension of "Who I am." I will follow with a discussion of "Who and What I Know" and "What I Can."

Psychological Dimension of Holding Self: Who I Am

As depicted in Table 4.4, intelligence officers represented the "Who I Am" primary psychological dimension of *Holding Self* through three self-concept categories: self-appraisals, reflected appraisals, and personal values as the "believed self." Self-appraisals represented ways in which participants articulated internalized views of who they believed they were—Mead's (1934) internalized "I"— in ways that supported responses to TWB. Reflected appraisals emerged as representations of what participants believed others thought they were or would do—the "I" created through interaction with one's social environment (Blumer, 1969; Mead, 1934). Personal values formed a predictive and regulatory "believed self" (R. G. Lord & Brown, 2001) in responding to TWB. As co-equal aspects of self-concepts, each category represented a fractal in a single prism.

Table 4.4

Categories and Properties of Holding Self Primary Psychological Dimension—Who I Am

Primary Psychological Dimension	Category	Property
Who I Am	Self-Appraisal	Am and Can
		Not that Person
		Leadership Nerd
		Adapter
	Reflected Appraisal	Lines
		Approachable
		Valued
		Dad's Voice
	Personal Values	Sense of Patriotism
		Stoplight

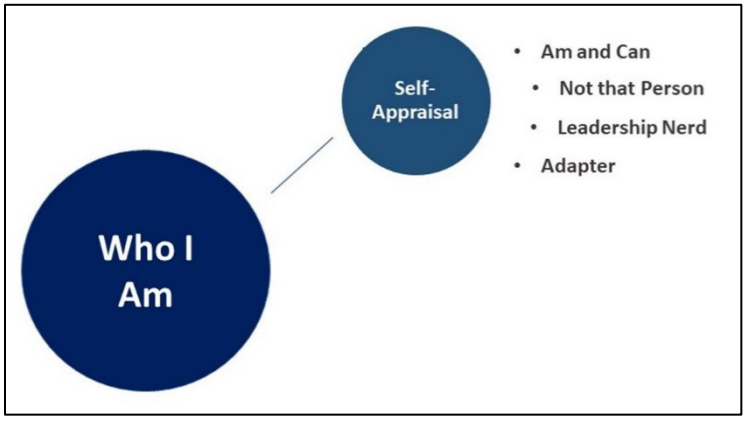
Participants reflected self-concepts predominately through direct self-appraisal (301 expressions across the 20 participants), followed by reflected appraisals (91 expressions) and personal values (88 expressions). All participants reflected self-concepts; however, they weighted those explorations within self-concept categories in individualized ways. For example, Natalie only reflected self-concepts though self-appraisals, while reflected appraisals from others were significant in David's self-concepts. Lamar was the most balanced, with self-appraisal, reflected appraisals, and personal values emerging in his interviews almost equally. While no generalizable conclusions can be reached due to sample size, the distinctions

illustrate the way in which individuals may view themselves through what they believe they are, what they perceive others believe they are, and the values they hold.

Choosing a category to express self-concepts became internal processes within *Holding Self* as boundaries around what they would do within toxic events, what they expected from others in the dynamic, and what they would tolerate. These processes of articulating self-concepts were the initial choices of response TWB that transcended longitudinally throughout the experience as mechanisms to reestablish equilibrium of position and power. These choices will be explored in the following section through three categories and their properties.

Figure 4.5

Category and Properties of Who I Am—Self-Appraisal



Category of Self-Appraisal. As illustrated in Figure 4.5, participants constructed self-appraisals through four properties—"Am and Can," "Not that Person," "Leadership Nerd," and "Adapter"—in which they staked claims on who they perceived they were in the intelligence environment.

Property of Am and Can. Participants communicated self-concepts most directly through claims of who they were using phrases beginning with "I." Claims of "self" surfaced variations of "I am," "I can," and other statements in which the "I" captured a characteristic:

> I am who I am. I got comfortable in my skin many years ago, and frankly, it's served me well. (David)
>
> I try to be careful with my words. (Zeke)

Expressions of "I" in the context of "Am and Can" centered the conversations on characteristics about themselves that they perceived most central to how they responded to toxic events. Participants explored self-appraisals as sources of pride:

> I'm a pretty driven person and have been driven my whole career, both to do a good job, very confident in my abilities. (Gwen)

> I knew my value and my worth. (Eve)

In some cases, they used the “Am and Can” property to make meaning of experiences by recreating themselves as the heroes or of their own stories (McAdams, 1993; McAdams & Jones, 2017;):

> I am perseverant. I have grit. I can take the heat. I’m determined. (Kelly)

> Some people . . . this is all that they are. I think that's probably what separates me from a lot of other people. (Ben)

In other cases, they took ownership of their shortcomings:

> Maybe that's a pettiness of my own personality, where I just love to prove people wrong. (Maria)

“Am and Can” as a property reflected the most basic representation of what they were in the intelligence environment. These self-concepts were central to how they believed they represented themselves toxic events. Another property surfaced similar permutations of “self” but in claims of who they were not: “Not That Person.”

Property of Not that Person. As participants staked claims of who they were through the property of “Am and Can,” they also expressed who they were not. The rejected “selves” functioned as boundaries around what they valued in themselves, what they tolerated in others, and what they could do in toxic environments. “Not that Person” formed an unacceptable alternative “self” in reaction to stereotypes of who others thought they should be:

> I'm not that person that kind of curtsies and looks up and says, may I please speak, may I please ask a question that's relevant to this topic? (Margaret)

Intelligence officers also made claims of “self” as boundaries for tolerance:

> I learned early in my career, there's only so much BS that I'll take from anyone. (Ben)

> I can't just be silent. I just can't curl up in a ball and disappear. I'm living this reality, too. I should have a valid place in whatever environment that I'm in. (Kit)

Bounded “selves” also staked claims on what they expected from others:

> I just continued to stay consistent with my message and very clear with my supervisor, my supervisor's supervisor. (Ben)

And, when they needed to show themselves self-compassion:

> I also gave myself a lot of self-compassion. (Finn)

Finally, "Not that Person" surfaced as modeling behaviors for others for whom they were responsible:

> If somebody is saying something or somebody's doing something, is it a battle worth fighting, and what's your expected outcome? It's something I still talk to my kids or talk to my coworkers about when things come up. (Dana)

The concept of the "self" as responsible for others extended to another property of "Who I Am." These reflections required that they balance who they believed they were versus what they owed to others, particular among participants who were supervisors. Thus, intersections with their self-concepts as leaders were seamless. The following section will discuss this dynamic within the property of "Leadership Nerd."

Property of Leadership Nerd. Eighteen of the 20 participants were either senior leads, first-line supervisors, or organizational managers. Thus, a duality of shared responsibility for "self" and others surfaced in the interviews. Intelligence officers explored synergies and tensions within this dynamic through their self-concepts as formal and referential leaders:

> I like to think of myself as a little bit of a leadership nerd. I embody the servant leader model. (Dana)

> I've done a fair amount of reading on leadership literature myself. I had a pretty good feel for how I should handle that situation to be a good manager. (Finn)

Stewardship and leadership modeling were integral to these self-concepts, which intersected with approaches for dealing with even healthy conflict on teams. This modeling also integrated with "Not That Person":

> I worked really hard to instill that really early with my team. I said, "Look, we can talk about anything on this team, but as soon as you get emotional, it stops." (Lamar)

Participants linked "Leadership Nerd" to advocacy as a form of leaderly "self":

> If I'm not paying attention to my team, then I'm going to encounter an issue at that time of operation. I know what was at stake. (Aedan)

For Caucasians, activating the leadership nerd meant understanding one's own privilege:

> When people bring these problems to me, it's difficult for me because I'm not in a marginalized group. For all intents and purposes, I would consider I've had a fairly easy life. (Joel)

As noted, intelligence officers explored self-concepts through the lens of past experiences with TWB. Not everyone was the hero of their own story. Because some perceived themselves as having been victimized, stories included being unrewarded or even rejected:

> The dirty little secret is that all that black people do is work hard. The only legacy we have is our name, which probably isn't even our name. This whole country is built on the fact that black people work hard, and we don't get credit for the work that we do. (Kit)

Property of Adapter. When referencing an individual, an "adapter" reflects an ability to construct and alter a plan to changing circumstances (E. Z.-Liu et al., 2001). The property of "Adapter" emerged early in the data collection and surfaced throughout the grounded theory portion of the study as a self-concept defined by maneuverability:

> I have rear guard actions. (Loess)

And disciplined toward desired outcomes:

> I adapt. I do a lot of compartmentalizing. I always have to reframe how I approach things. (Kelly)

Participants also referenced being "adapters" as a source of peace amid toxic circumstances:

> Good, now I don't have to deal with you people anymore. It's like having a bad neighbor and one of you moves. It just got to the point where the juice wasn't worth the squeeze, so I just let it go. (Rico)

As well as self-concepts as change agents:

> If I see something wrong, I'm going to fix it. It's just, probably, the way I've been raised. (Joel)

For some, parlaying that self-concept into being the change agent carried risk to career trajectories. However, they felt positioned to withstand the risk:

> I'm retirement eligible. So, there is no risk. I'd probably still [have] done the same thing. I'd probably done it the same way. (Rico)

> I feel like I don't have anything to lose now because I'm not really striving for another promotion. So, I'm noisy now. (Kelly)

Others reflected on tempering approaches as mechanisms for self-protection:

> I try not to be as outspoken as I normally am because it carries retribution. I'm not in position to have any power and influence. Regardless of where I am, it doesn't dictate my desire to address this issue. So, I think that sense of being connected with fellow black IC professionals is the input on that. (Mike)

The intersection between self-concepts as an "Adapter" linked directly to the IC mission through a "purposed self":

> Most days, I can't wait to get to work. I love the people I work with. I love the mission. I love all everything about being at work. (Dana)

This "purposed self" linked directly to work as an embodied patriotism:

> I feel a patriotic duty to go to work. Hopefully, I'm protecting the nation. (Gwen)

> You don't want to ever devalue yourself because . . . lives are at stake, and decisions are made that eventually roll themselves up. (Mike)

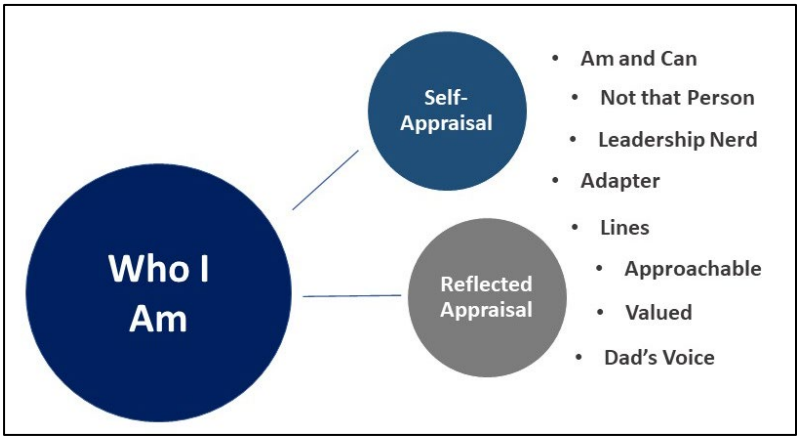
Properties within the "Self-Appraisal" category defined characteristics and self-concepts that intelligence officers perceived were relevant to how they responded to TWB. Thus, the primary action dimension of "Who I Am" relied partially upon an image of what one believed they were and were not, even as those self-concepts did not always contribute to best outcomes. A second category focused the lens on the "Reflected Appraisals" category. Within "Reflected Appraisals," self-concepts were defined by what participants believed others thought they were. The next section will explore properties within the category of "Reflected Appraisals."

Category of Reflected Appraisals. Within "Reflected Appraisals," intelligence officers constructed self-concepts partially through perceptions of what others in the environment thought of them. This transition from personal claiming to asserting self-concepts through the reflected "self" revealed itself in the narrative. Whereas the "Self-Appraisal" category included

assertions beginning with “I” and depersonalized “you” statements, reflected appraisals more commonly referenced “me” and depersonalized “they” or “others” as participants defined themselves as the social selves theorized in Mead (1934) and Blumer (1969). Within this confluence, properties reflected nuanced permutations of select properties within the “Self-Appraisal” category. The following section will outline four properties of the “Reflected Appraisals” category illustrated in Figure 4.6: “Lines,” “Approachable,” “Valued,” and “Dad’s Voice.”

Figure 4.6

Category and Properties of Who I Am—Reflected Appraisal



Property of Lines.

Participants explored boundaries for tolerance within the “Not that Person” property of the “Self-Appraisal” category. The theme also surfaced in the “Reflected Appraisal” category through perceptions on what others in the social environment knew about their “Lines” for tolerance:

> There will be a line drawn, and people will know not to cross it. (Ben)

To be relevant to how intelligence officers responded to TWB, both the “Lines” and the penalties for crossing them had to be visible. This visibility transpired experientially as participants connected their boundaries for appropriate behavior with others’ understandings about them as social beings:

> I think that there aren't that many people in my peer group who know me well who would try to mess with me very much. It’s at least believed in the peer group that I wouldn't tolerate it and would stop it in its tracks. (Gwen)

However, “Lines” were not always based on experience; reputation was also integral. Second-hand experiences that one’s colleagues shared about them with others became forms of lore that ultimately shaped valued self-appraisals.

> During that time, I also developed a no-nonsense type reputation. (Maria)

Although self-appraisals often included being the heroes of their own stories, self-concepts emerged around being the heroes in others’ stories, as well:

> I snapped. I told him, I said, "Look, I don't know what you want me to do, but I followed the process.” I want to say it was legendary, but people heard about it, because I didn't let him push me. (David)

However, “Lines” of demarcation also occurred when reflected and self-appraisals conflicted:

> I care what other people think, but I don't care what they think if I know I'm doing the right thing or let that kind of stuff eat at me. (Dana)

For some, “Lines” emerged as porous because they perceived that the rules for managing perceptions were different depending on one’s power in the social environment:

> The expectation of me before people really get to know me is, "This guy, he's a big, fit, black dude who has a pretty stern look on his face. He's probably aggressive," something like that, right? (Lamar)

> That the whole game the way it's set up, it isn't meant for someone like me to play. (Kit)

“Lines” formed boundaries for what intelligence officers believed others knew about their expectations, which partially mapped how they functioned in the intelligence environment. “Lines” were both reputational and experiential guides for others, while also shaping self-appraisals when the “Lines” complemented what participants believed about themselves. The next section discusses a second property of the “Reflected Appraisal” category, “Approachable,” in which they saw themselves as liked and valued by others.

Property of Approachable. “Approachable” as a property of the “Reflected Appraisal” category reflects participant perceptions that others liked them, trusted them, and found them approachable as social beings:

> They're just comfortable coming up and talking to me. I'm a nice guy, at least, I think I am. (Joel)

As with “Lines,” being approachable not only surfaced as reflections of others but in the validation of what those “others” were telling their “others”:

> People in other branches have said, "Hey, you get an opening in your branch, let me know. I'd like to come up there." (Rico)

When participants explored the property of “Approachable,” reflected appraisals in which others trusted and respected them emerged in compelling ways through perceived expectations of transparency and quality work:

> Where I worked before I was respected, and my work spoke for it. (Eve)

Perceiving that others trusted them served as validation to continue confronting toxic events:

> I think the reason why I've been able to maintain my sanity and a sense of drive is because the subordinates recognize the efforts that I do and at least respect the professionalism. They know that I will always be their advocate. (Mike)

Mike staked a position as an advocate for others, which intersected with the self-proclaimed advocacy referenced as part of the “Leadership Nerd” property of the “Self-Appraisals” category. However, being adopted as an advocate also carried risk:

> At any point [if] I feel like I'm being a hindrance to their career just because of the relationships, then I will do what's appropriate. Whether it's removing myself from that dynamic as much as I can [while] still maintaining my position as a manager or redirect. (Mike)

Therefore, even as they reflected upon the trust that others had bestowed, they weighed the risks to those relationships if they mishandled managing toxic environments:

> It was really important to me that I didn't jeopardized the trust that at least most people were willing to give me in that position. (Finn)

They also imagined alternate realities of post-trust work environments if they failed:

> They probably wouldn't trust me with issues. They'd go to somebody else, or they'll just completely brush it off and ignore it. (Joel)

“Lines” and “Approachable” primarily addressed coworker and subordinate perceptions of who they were as liked and trusted human beings. A third property of “Reflected Appraisals” surfaced when intelligence officers discussed how supervisors and others with formal power

perceived them. Within that framework, “Lines” and being “Approachable” gave way to being “Valued.”

Property of Valued. Intelligence officers gain value by providing intellectual space for policymakers to make decisions in furtherance of U.S. national security goals (J. Davis, 2003b; Fingar, 2011a). Individuals with formal supervisory responsibilities produce performance appraisals for achieving those objectives; however, one’s perceived value as an analyst or operational staff member emerges from relationships at multiple levels of hierarchy. Participants reflected upon others’ perceptions of them as high performers and valued intelligence officers.

> I was recognized . . . by seniors for building teams, not just team building, actually building and formulating teams. (Maria)

> I had worked with this senior executive in the past, and he was like, “This is who I need to help clean things up.” (Ben)

“Valued” defined participants as more than merely good. They perceived that they were singled out for specialized skills that few others could match. In another permutation on “Advocacy,” this reflected value emerged in stories of how their leadership advocated for them against the toxic personality:

> "Why in the world would we get you out of here? We do need your talents." So, at the office level, the office chief brought me up. I had had good relationships with all my office directors. (Dana)

And, when they related efforts to persuade their leadership that subordinates were creating toxic environments:

> To his credit, once he heard it from me, he started trying to do something about it. (Zeke)

Reflected appraisals of “Valued” emerged most pointedly as participants aligned what they valued in themselves with what their leadership also valued in them:

> I do know a fairly high executive said afterwards, "Well, we learned that when Loess tells us there is a problem, we ought to listen to him.” (Loess)

However, when they did not feel valued, reflected and self-appraisals became misaligned:

> I just kind of felt like I was just kind of the worker bee, like they just wanted the work out of me and over time, I felt like they wanted me to die. I felt like they didn't accept me for who I am, and they just wanted me to disappear. (Kit)

This misalignment became most acute when participants perceived that their leadership teams found them to be a threat:

> It struck me that could also have been a result of my growing influence with first line supervisors, and through them, to the rest of the subordinate supervisors in the workforce. (David)

Reflected appraisals of leader esteem contributed to self-concepts as valued members of the mission. As the comments above illustrate, the misalignment between self and reflected appraisals lent a fragility to self-concepts when the need to deconflict the two emerged in toxic events. However, leaders within the IC were not the only ones to contribute to reflected appraisals as "Valued." The final property of the "Reflected Appraisal" category concerned another form of leader who emerged as central to this aspect of the "self": "Dad's Voice."

Property of Dad's Voice. As noted elsewhere in this study, participant insights are reflections on memories rather than some objective recounting of details. Additionally, researcher interpretation of participant words and meaning further shaped the study's findings. However, at multiple points in this study, participants detoured from remembered toxic events into more contemporaneous analyses of why they responded to TWB the way they had in the past. One detour occurred as participants reflected upon their fathers' voices as signposts for acting appropriately:

> If we go directly to how I approach problems, my dad. He would listen to books on tape about leadership, and about people, and about conflict management just for years to try and better himself in that area. (Celine)

> My dad was very confrontational, but not in a bad way. It's just that he wouldn't shy away from things. (Joel)

Reflected appraisals form self-concepts through comparison. Thus, reflected appraisals became aligned with what we believe others expect us to be and create conflict when they are

not. Within “Dad’s Voice,” participants perceived their own responses to TWB as appropriate in alignment with the father’s challenges:

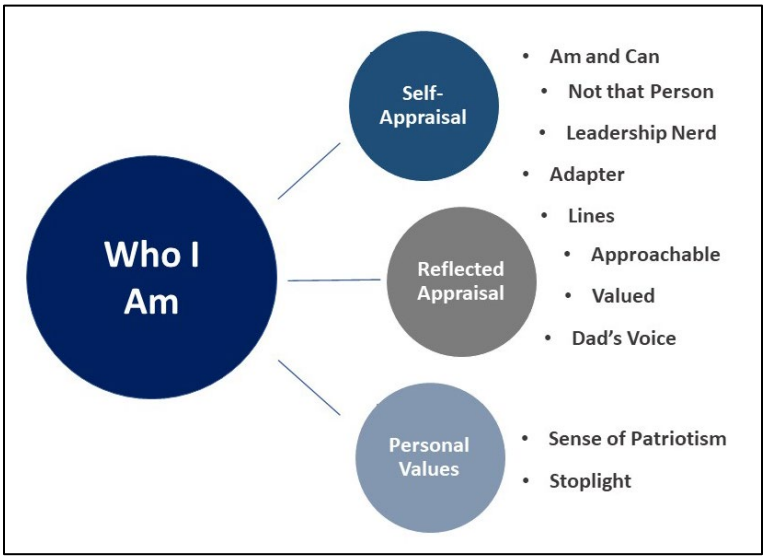
> When he was a child, he watched his cousin get lynched because a woman told a story that he didn't get off the sidewalk fast enough when she was walking. I always remember thinking about my dad, if he is not racist, if he's not holding on to that, no one has any excuse. He always reminded us several things. You're not your possessions, you're not the color of your skin. Your accomplishments are great, but they're not who you are. You have a responsibility to be a good person. (Lamar)

Because the property represented reflected appraisals on what their dad would think of their responses to TWB if he were here, “Dad’s Voice” approached the boundary between self-concepts reflected in others’ perceptions and notions of the “self” as representative of a larger set of values. The next category of the “Who I Am” primary psychological dimension confronts the role that personal values played in holding self-concepts amid TWB. The next section will discuss personal values as elements of “believed selves.”

Category of Who I Am—Personal Values. Participants in the study referenced self-concepts through personal values as “believed selves.” Like the claims-staking within self-appraisals, intelligence officers claimed ideals that they perceived as relevant to how they responded to TWB. The following properties illustrated in Figure 4.7 emerged: “Sense of Patriotism” and “Stoplight.”

Figure 4.7

Categories and Properties Who I Am—Personal Values



Property of Sense of Patriotism. As discussed elsewhere in this chapter, the intelligence mission is central to the “purposed self.” Thus, within the “Personal Values”

psychological dimension, intelligence officers reflected on their responses to TWB as expressions of patriotism:

> Like a sense of patriotism . . . if the ideals that we take an oath for are being challenged, ultimately the right thing to do is to still push in that direction, to get where we need to be. (Mike)

The ideal acted as a navigational tool when evaluating how to respond to toxic coworkers but also a sense of stewardship:

> When you leave, make sure it's no worse, maybe better than when you took over. (Rico)

"Sense of Patriotism" also reflected an acceptance that the sacrifices they would make as intelligence officers would be largely invisible to an American public. This same public would thrive because of their successes and blame them for failures (preventable and unpreventable, alike) in a complex world over which they exerted little control. These values were freely chosen:

> I think the self-compassion is a side effect of being purpose-driven, being able to see that the day-to-day stress is meaningful. It matters to people who will never know it, but yeah, just to be able to do the mission and keep things running. Then, you've got things like this that come along. That's really not even close to taking me away from this purpose that's driving me to be in this organization in the first place. (Finn)

These "believed selves" placed them in a collective whole enabling them to transcend petty incivilities:

> I think your good performers, part of the layer that goes in is their "self." I think many of the people, especially if you're looking for people in the intel community who have substantive experience, who in a crisis you can pick up from one job and put in another to surge, that the passion for the higher calling and how that translates to performance, I think the people who have that higher calling are good performers. (Gwen)

Within a "Sense of Patriotism," the "self" became so synonymous with work purpose that purpose and outcomes were inseverable. The question remained as to how these ideals would thrive when they were challenged by toxic personalities and enablers. Participants reflected on those questions in the next property of "Personal Values": "Stoplight."

Property of Stoplight. "Personal Values" emerged as a theme to shield the "self," as well as an ethos of what was and was not appropriate in the intelligence workplace:

> Where's the stoplight? Where's the boundary for professional behavior? I should never be having conversations about the word horny at work. (Margaret)

Concepts of what "should" be part of the work environment and what "should not" intersected with how participants viewed themselves as professionals and stewards:

> Do we want young people to see hostility and toxicity in this organization, or do we want them to see something better? (Finn)

Misalignments between their entity's approach to the "Stoplight" and their own personal values emerged within disillusionment and decisions to change career trajectories:

> I'm at a point in my career where I want to be considered for senior, and if that was the behavior which was tolerated . . . it wasn't with my programming. I would just rather wait it out. (Ben)

> Do you want to be part of a leadership team that makes it okay to be rude, nasty, and unprofessional to its employees? You don't really know because it's a club that you have to get into, you don't really know if that's pervasive. (Gwen)

Accountability to respect the "Stoplight" emerged as both an organizational responsibility but also one that they owned as professionals:

> It's one thing to send an email to reply a memo back but there has to be a follow-up response. [Otherwise] the people who are the culprits, that are treating us unfairly, won't be held accountable. (Mike)

Accountability was more than just a commitment to confront behavior. The commitment was integral to how they saw themselves as leaders. However, embodying leadership emerged as a set of traits and skills one had to develop:

> It's traits that . . . you may have been born with, but they're honed skills over time. They're learned behaviors, and you have to be a caring person in the first place. (Dana)

Summary. As categories of "Who I Am," "Self-Appraisals," "Reflected Appraisals," and "Personal Values" formed variations on how the "self" intersected with claimed boundaries, leadership, and commitment to the mission. Each frame of reference was integral to perspectives on why they responded to TWB in the ways they did. How aligned their personal values were to the perceived values of their IC entity became inherent to those discussions as well. These claimed, reflected, and believed selves within "Who I Am" as a psychological

dimension formed an internal set of actions in which they assessed who they were in their environment and the relationship of that "self" to the behavior. However, staking claims to who they were was not sufficient to resource those responses. They also needed to take stock of other available resources in the form of networks and knowledge. That stock-taking is central to the next primary psychological dimension of "Who and What I Know."

Psychological Dimension of Holding Self: Who and What I Know

As participants shared their stories of TWB, they described internal processes of *Holding Self* in which they inventoried who each character was in the plot. They also inventoried the knowledge, skills, and abilities available to them in managing the toxic environment, as well as what they lacked. As depicted in the matrix at Table 4.5, "Who and What I Know" fell into four larger categorical themes—"Learning the Zoo," "I Had Mentors," "Not Just Me," and "Owning the Other." While some categories were confined to the single property of its overall category, three properties surfaced within "I Had Mentors" and two within "Owning the Other." Each of these elements are discussed below.

Table 4.5

Categories and Properties of Who and What I Know

Primary Psychological Dimension	Category	Property
Who and What I Know	Learning the Zoo	
	I Had Mentors	Navigating the Field
		Sensemaking the Behavior
		How I Got Here
	Not Just Me	
	Owning the Other	Factional Dynamic
		Big and Black

Category of Learning the Zoo. Global events cast IC mission requirements into a state of flux, which imposed an instability onto who and what participants knew at any given time. They associated their responses to TWB with their ability to navigate who and what they knew in the intelligence morass. The IC's organizational diversity, micro-missions (e.g., conventional naval forces versus counterterrorism

versus strategic capabilities, etc.) increased these challenges as participants rotated among agencies with significantly different cultures:

> You have to kind of learn the temperature of the room and learn who's-who-in-the-zoo and all those other catchphrases that they like to roll out. I know how to do that. (Margaret)

Participants described fault lines between military, contracting, and government work roles created by the ability of personnel to move between them; a set of governing structures proscribing what can be said to whom and in what context buttressed these complexities. Being former military was the cost of doing business as an intelligence officer in some organizations —with higher relational fees for those formerly associated with the wrong service:

> He will talk to the Air Force members differently than the other services. (Joel)

The outcome for many participants was a professional solitude, an untenable situation in a profession that is fundamentally about teams, sharing, and collaboration.

> I was shocked because it was just during that time I was getting up and running where I really didn't have a way to prove myself. That's how it affected me. I just didn't have anybody to talk to. (Eve)

Participants described relationships to powerful others and to the larger organization as hard currency needed to function as intelligence officers. Thus, “Learning the Zoo” required learning the organization, but also establishing legitimacy. When they felt unable to establish legitimacy, the availability of healthy mentoring and networks as navigational and sensemaking tools became integral to response.

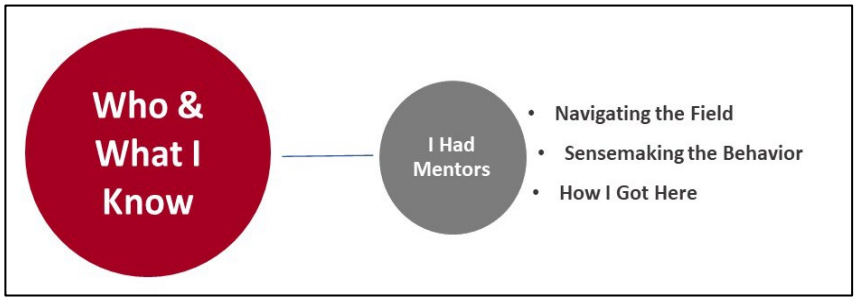
Category of I Had Mentors. The availability of mentors played a significant role in how intelligence officers responded to TWB. However, the IC’s commitment to mentoring to build continuity, competence, and stewardship is often found more in the core values of micro-organizations than in formal structure. Figure 4.8 shows three properties for “I Had Mentors” in which: “Navigating the Field,” “Sensemaking the Behavior,” and “How I Got Here” played inventorying roles for *Holding Self* within “Who and What I Know”:

Property of Navigating the Field. Because open access to information on the IC is limited, new employees have minimal opportunity to learn the cultures and structures of their agencies prior to arriving unless they served in a select number of college-level internships. Thus, mentoring relationships were integral to learning how to "navigate the field":

> If I had not had these mentors, I would definitely not have been able to navigate this field. (Natalie)
>
> I always had mentors and branch chiefs who taught me. They put me in a position to succeed. (Dana)

Figure 4.8

Category and Properties of Who and What I Know—I Had Mentors



Relationships with mentors became more than just how to build competencies and skills. These relationships established early self-concepts as valued members of the community who would contribute to the core mission even if they were not sure how to do so. Mentors would also provide something more critical: a sense of safety and deserving of respect from coworkers and supervisors. Thus, mentors enabled voice:

> I think having strong mentors who will not only show you the way, but also show you how to disagree professionally, helped to bolster that voice. (Ben)

While generalizable conclusions are not possible, a trend emerged during the coding of the interviews: Participants who had mentoring relationships to help them hold their self-concepts voiced greater success in managing toxic events than those who lacked them. Alternatively, an absence of mentoring contributed to self-concepts as not being supported in general. As the next section shows, mentoring relationships solidified early and remained foundational throughout their careers as calibration tools for sensemaking in toxic events.

Property of Sensemaking the Behavior. While mentoring helped establish professional self-concepts early, intelligence officers linked stable, long-term relationships to the

ability to make sense of toxic events. Therefore, mentoring relationships not only played the role of navigating “what I know” as IC professionals. They also established an inventory of support structures defined by “who I know” that enabled them to stabilize their responses to TWB.

> I had some pretty awesome mentors that would literally take my call . . . pretty much any time of day or night to listen to me trying to make sense of this person's behavior. (Christina)

Mentors calibrated participant expectations for what “should” be happening in the work environment. As a form of sensemaking about the behavior of toxic personalities, mentors bolstered participant efforts to “hold self” by providing perspective, guidance, and support. Career decisions, including whether to continue in the profession, influenced participant decisions on promotion opportunities and longevity. Sensemaking about when enough was enough was key:

> He shared a very candid statement with me. “You know, there's going to be a point in your career when you're going to be tired of eating shit, and you're going to know when that point is.” (Ben)

Property of How I Got Here. Participants drew connections between the role of mentoring, how they “got here,” and how they have confronted TWB. However, mentors also instilled values in relation to their obligations to coach others experiencing similar challenges:

> As long as I'm there, there are certain things that I'm going to make [sure] branch members know how to do and do them well. It's not like I want to lose sleep over it when I leave, but it would bug me if I thought, "Jesus, I'm going to leave and half the guys don't even know how to do this simple function." No, that's not going to happen. (Rico)

Cross-cultural mentoring also emerged as a dynamic in the interpretation of cross-cultural TWB:

> Everybody around me was an older, white male. I thought to myself, "Oh, my God, here I am, this little brown girl. They're all going to hate me.” They dedicated their time, they welcomed me with open arms. They taught me everything that I knew. (Maria)

As her career progressed, Maria parlayed this navigational and sensemaking role into advising other young women on how to confront TWB in the Caucasian- and male-dominated IC:

> I [would say], "Hey, think about this, talk to this person. This is how I got here. This is the course that I took. This is what I had done." (Maria)

Thus, “I Had Mentors” left an indelible mark in the form of lessons to rely upon as participants assessed “Who and What I Know.” An absence of those relationships also left marks on participants who lacked them. However, mentors were more than simple counseling resources. For these intelligence officers, their counsel created a sense of experiential camaraderie in toxic events in the form of “Not Just Me”:

Category of Not Just Me. Participants juxtaposed moments of feeling isolated with moments in which they had support. As discussed earlier, most of the TWB experiences surfaced during the grounded theory portion of the study were passive behaviors instead of overt aggression. Because others often relegate passive forms of TWB to “interpretation,” intelligence officers related periods of isolation as the burden shifted to them to explain and justify the effects. Knowing that mentors and others in their networks had similar experiences were seminal moments in *Holding Self*:

> I had a mentor from another agency who was familiar with this particular guy who then told me a ton of other things that he had been involved in. That was just like, "Well, that's obviously the situation." (Natalie)

Camaraderie and support were not always overt but shadowed expressions from those who feared they might be next:

> The rest of the leadership team, my other branch chief peers at the time in that division, they were all in my court. (Dana)

Participants who were targets of TWB related the preponderance of experiences with “Not Just Me.” However, participants also explored seminal moments while witnessing toxic events directed at others:

> It came from all of the team. It came from so many people across all the team, people that had only worked with him one time, maybe, in the last three months. (Joel)

The bolstering effect that “Not Just Me” had on the ability to address the behavior was significant. Thus, “Not Just Me” within the dimension of “Who and What I Know” was also a reflection of how the critical mass of others may affect response:

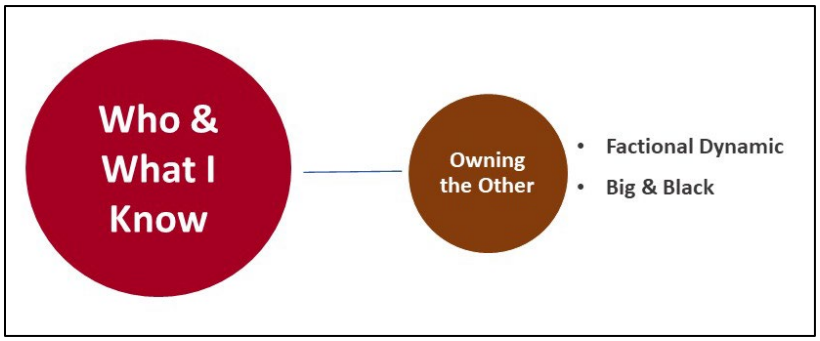
> Everybody finally woke up that this is an issue, and it's not just a bunch of people being adolescent about what's happening in the unit. (Zeke)

"Not Just Me" changed the dynamic in how intelligence officers responded to TWB. As will be discussed in a subsequent section, participants who explored this kinship of toxic experiences also claimed a stronger ability to "hold self" in the situation. For the purposes of this discussion, "Who and What You *Don't* Know" emerged as another aspect of this inventorying process affecting those unable to leverage these resources. This dynamic was particularly acute for ethnic and gendered minorities and is the subject of the next element of "Who and What I Know": "Owning the Other."

Category of Owning the Other. "Owning the Other" referred to perceptions of being perceived as anomalies in the toxic environment. As with "I Had Mentors" and "Not Just Me," "Owning the Other" calibrated who they were in relation to the toxic personality, support networks, and systems of redress. As illustrated in Figure 4.9, "Owning the Other" consisted of two properties: "Factional Dynamic" and "Big and Black."

Figure 4.9

Category and Properties of Who and What I Know—Owning the Other



Property of Factional Dynamic. "Factional Dynamic" included an awareness of whether participants were on the right or wrong side of power in relation to cliques and favorites:

> [It was] more of a similar factional dynamic. But rather than it having a mindset dimension, it was more just politics of one clique, trying to make sure they get taken care of. If you're not part of that clique, then it can be a toxic environment for you or others. (Loess)

Empirical research indicates that targets of TWB become marginalized within organizations even when isolating the target is not the terminal goal of the toxic personality

(Ciuk, 2011; Hodson et al., 2006). Inter- and intra-organizational factions intersected with complex group identities related to sociodemographic status in this study. Because “Factional Dynamic” formed self-concepts at least partially around being on the relational periphery, the element also minimized access to resources to confront TWB. Thus, the Caucasian female and African American participants of both genders perceived that owning their “other-ship” was central to efforts to “hold self” amid toxic factions:

> It wasn't until recently when I was called an “old dog,” when I wasn't able to even compete or interview for a position that only had a handful of candidates, that it made me understand and realize that maybe the objective was not about diversity or even having the most competitive environment for a position. (Mike)

Women of both ethnicities took stock of how their roles as patriots became minimized because they were outside the “bro club,” a sentiment that also recalled “Not Just Me”:

> I think that the paramilitary culture influx had a negative impact on our culture. I started hearing everybody start to call, "Hey, brother, what's up brother?" Then that's how the men all started to address each other. So, you would get that label, "Oh, mom is here." (Maria)

Being in the wrong faction extended into practical impacts on bonuses and salaries as the lack of female leaders inhibited the ability to promote women:

> I have seen it with my own eyes that women . . . are penalized for the same behaviors that men are rewarded for. It's making a difference in our promotions and our pay. (Margaret)

> How do you overcome that in an organization where [so few] division officers are female? (Gwen)

Property of Big and Black. “Owning the Other” destabilized permission norms for responding to TWB when simply being “Big and Black” incurred assumptions about whether one was a threat. For African American male participants in the study, self-advocacy amid TWB required sidestepping, lateral maneuverability, and subtlety they perceived as unrequired of their Caucasian counterparts.

> A supervisor of mine made disparaging comments that went like this. “When you talk to people, you look at them in the eye.” Where am I supposed to look at them? “Well, you're a big guy.” This is something I can't control. But it's like, why are you talking to me about somebody else's shortcomings that someone else can't deal with? (Ben)

At the extreme, African American males perceived that even remaining silent carried risk. Self-advocacy included the mantra, “Don’t react while black”:

> I knew that I should not react in any way. I know that because of the perception of what I should or could be, the full weight of administrative action will be thrown at me if I were to fit the mold. (Lamar)

“Big and Black” also included the co-signing process of within-group advocacy, support, warning-systems, and vouching. Participants described these processes as forms of inclusion that had to be crafted carefully:

> There's only so much of each other's offices we're going to go to, because people start talking. What we did was go to lunch and just talk outside of work. (Ben)

Summary. Inventorying “Who and What I Know” shaped how participants assessed resources, networks, and positioning, which became fundamental to *Holding Self* within TWB. These processes also worked with “Who I Am” categories and properties to formulate self-concepts. However, participants surfaced a third set of inventorying processes: taking stock of their own agency to affect their circumstances. This final psychological dimension of “What I Can” is the subject of the next section.

Primary Psychological Dimension of Holding Self: What I Can

“What I Can” was the most compact of the primary psychological conditions with only two overarching categories. However, the dimension was no less powerful because it provided a framework in which participants assessed agency in responding to TWB. Consequently, “What I Can” leveraged the self-concepts of “Who I Am” and the acumen of “Who and What I Know” to create frameworks for affecting their own circumstances using voice and action. However, perceptions of agency relied upon what they knew of themselves as well as competing levels of agency by others in the toxic environment. “What I Can” not only determined how much control that participants believed they had; functioning within this dimension affected how they felt about themselves in those circumstances (Roseman, 1984).

As illustrated in Table 4.6**,** the following description will discuss “What I Can” through two, overarching categories: “Work as Voice and “Sensing Opportunities.”

Category of Work as Voice. Participants framed voice as a mechanism for communicating who they were in relation to the mission and how they confronted toxic environments. Working hard and performing well were tools for communicating to others who they were. Thus, voice was not only an auditory form but action:

> The way I approach being a [redacted] analyst—because it is a very solitary sort of experience—I came in thinking, just work hard, and I'll get rewarded for the work that I do. (Kit)

However, work as a form of voice and agency had a catch because competition over intellectual space, performance, and recognition elevated the toxic personality’s voice over their own, even in silence:

> I wasn't getting a clear affirmative reply. But I think after maybe doing it one too many times, I got a bit of a . . . it wasn't really directly verbally expressed. But it was just a body language in a posture of like, "Well, why do you keep bringing this up?” (Loess)

Table 4.6

Categories of What I Can

Primary Psychological Dimension	Category
What I Can	Work as Voice
	Sensing Opportunities

Levels of agency emerged within a complex set of organizational, interpersonal, and situational factors. Thus, “Work as Voice” flexed as a muscle developed over time:

> When you reach a certain degree of success, you have much more leeway to voice your opinions and push back on what you know to be the case and what you know to be fact. (Maria)

A tenant of constructivist grounded theory is that the meaning of remembered choices and impact will continue to emerge within the interview (Charmaz, 2002b). This dynamic revealed itself in the study as “Work as Voice” became a reference point for reflecting on imagined career impacts to confronting the TWB at different points in their careers. One element included positioning themselves as “different now”:

> It took me 20 years in a career to have a really bad experience, but if you have that bad experience in year one, or year three, or year five, to lose your fire that early, it would almost be, “Why keep going?” (Gwen)

“Keeping going” through barriers to “What I Can” interacted with ethnic and gendered identities. African American participants explored the interaction between reflected appraisals of their ethnic identities, what they could do, and how the responded to TWB. These reflections also included their perceptions of how resources differed from those available to Caucasians:

> I've seen in other places where a minority, out of frustration of just having to live in this box all the time, finally reacts. Even if it's not some type of administrative leave, you absolutely see it at the end of the year in your performance appraisal. (Lamar)

Caucasian and African American women how “Work as Voice” became diminished when others silenced their work by talking down and over them. They also observed others using silence as a way of survival:

> I had a deputy who was a woman, and she just kind of went along with whatever, and then the [GS-]15 in charge of our group was a man. (Natalie)

“Work as Voice” translated into what participants perceived that they could do within toxic events. However, expressing voice relied upon having an instrument for projection. Being able to speak up relied upon leveraging knowledge of the organization through who and what they knew so that they could sense opportunities to use voice productively.

Category of Sensing Opportunities. “Sensing Opportunities” reflected the ability to exact rewards for organizational acumen (“Who and What I Know) in direct and circuitous ways:

> So, I saw this as an opportunity. "You guys want this so bad, it's all yours. Hey, be careful what you ask for, because now I'm handing it to you.” I’m paid to manage. This is just another aspect of me managing. (Rico)

> You just maybe say, "Well, if this is how it's going to be, I'm going to end-run you by producing at such a level that it’s almost above reproach, and it'll make it very hard for you to take me down. Second is to produce enough that they would really, as one of them even said once, "It would really smell bad if they took you down." (Loess)

Grounded theory-based studies seek to understand participant meaning of a phenomenon. In a metaphorical sense, interviewing participants is a symbiotic process in which the participant is carrying the researcher on a journey; however, the destination must be a place

the researcher finds value in visiting. In studies related to traumatic or abusive experiences, participants may detour into discussions of others' actions and motives. The researcher must guide the interview back on course when rhetorical side roads emerge. However, "Sensing Opportunities" was a category in which participants' descriptions of the toxic personality's motives and opportunities became revelatory about their own:

> I think this person . . . well, we all know how to play office politics to supervisors and manage up. You know, he knew how to play the game. (Christina)

How they framed responses to TWB relied partially upon reflected appraisals, perceptions of who and what the toxic personality knew, and what the participant could do in comparison to others. This collective hall of mirrors led them to size up memories within expectations of future interactions:

> They were in with the senior, and when you're in with a senior, you ride that coattail. (Kit)

The ability to shape relationships with superiors and others with referential forms of power constitute currency in the IC; these skills are one reason that "Who and What I Know" is so powerful as a dimension of *Holding Self* when intelligence officers show equal levels of skill in using them through the agency of "What I Can." Thus, meaning of response to TWB for intelligence officers included judging the toxic personality's superior ability to contextualize as attractive to a wider array of likeminded relationships:

> She was able to find protection and found a way to stay. (Eve)

These relationships constituted more than simple access. They represented endorsement by the power structures surrounding them. For these intelligence officers, the toxic personality's ability to attract likeminded peers into a closed orbit around them hampered participants' abilities to use opportunities. At time, the outcomes were subtle messages in which participants perceived their place on a periphery. Other times, the outcomes were blunt-force trauma to careers and self-concepts:

> These were people who saw an opportunity to empower themselves, and she welcomed it. I never saw the writing on the wall. I certainly realized that I didn't understand my environment as well as I needed to. (David)

Summary. As dimensions of *Holding Self,* "What I Can" interacted with "Who I Am" and "Who and What I Know" to psychologically position the participants in the toxic environment. They functioned within the core conditions that defined boundaries around the toxic environment and responses to it. Responding to TWB in the intelligence environment required projecting that dynamic onto the external environment through action dimensions. The following section will discuss the three action dimensions and two inter-dimensions of *Holding Self*.

Primary Action and Inter-Dimensions of Holding Self

Primary action dimensions of *Holding Self* consisted of strategies and tactics for confronting TWB so that self-concepts remained intact, and the participant could continue to function effectively. Returning to Figure 4.1 and its depiction of the flow of the model, the primary psychological conditions were internal processes as preparatory for primary action dimensions and two inter-dimensions as loci for social action with identifiable conditions, processes, and consequences. The explanatory matrix in Table 4.7 depicts three primary action dimensions, two inter-dimensions, and related elements of *Holding Self,* including conditions, processes, consequences associated with each framework.

Tactics for *Holding Self* were as diverse as the self-concepts they were designed to protect. However, unlike the psychological dimensions in their qualitative agnosticism toward a positive outcome, action dimensions differed in how effective they were in maintaining self-concepts and fostering the intelligence mission. How positive responses were toward the mission pivoted around which response trajectories the participant followed.

Table 4.7

Primary Action Dimensions of Holding Self and Related Elements

Primary or Inter	Action Dimension	Conditions	Processes	Consequences	Outcome
Primary	Seeking Subliminal	The Game What's Worth It	Adapting & Soldiering Walking It Off Finding Others	Lessons Learned The Mission Wins Don't Have to Be Here	Sustaining Mission
Inter	Seeking-Folding	What's at My Back Power Dynamics	Being the Buffer Blowing & Walking Altering Dreams Running Up the Chain	Return to Seeking Subliminal Transition to Folding In	
Primary	Folding In	Work Wife Lockout Glass Floor It's Normal	Am I too Sensitive Shutting Out Watching Words Not Affecting Me	Mission Dread Get a Banana Lost Faith	Diminishing the Mission
Inter	Folding-Reinforcing	The Leash Unmapped Animosity Cliques & Faction	Wanting Out You're Leaving? Blaming Self Talking to a Toddler	Return to Folding In Transition to Reinforcing	
Primary	Reinforcing Style	Swirl of Unhealthy Name & Rank, Please Almost Like Politics	Being Me Looping Becoming Ill Shutting Down	Disengagement	Disengaging the Mission

One note of caution: The theoretical model reflects the meaning of responses participants provided during the interviews. As noted in Chapter 3, the response trajectories were conveyed through memories. While no participant remained on each path consistently during the interviews, each chose a single, dominant dimension to explore their response. The

following section will explore each action dimension, related conditions and consequences, and inter-dimensions that triggered movement onto another response path.

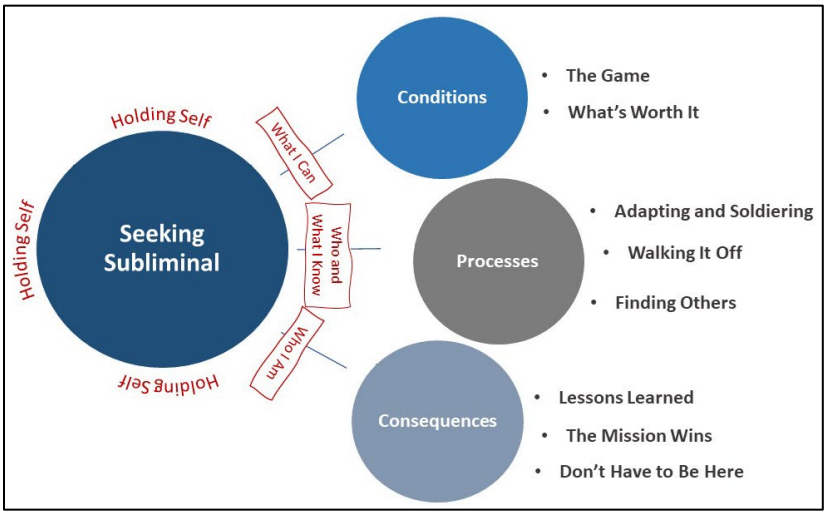
Primary Action Dimension: Seeking Subliminal

As depicted in Figure 4.10, the primary action dimension of "Seeking Subliminal" is a set of strategies and tactics that participants adopted to maneuver around or alter the toxic circumstances so that they could continue to hold "self," as well as support the intelligence mission without compromising performance, goals, or self-concepts. The name for the dimension emerged from Aedan's approach to TWB during intelligence operations.

> By identifying what's triggering their behavior and then using it to control one's environment and behavior or simply be a good listener and respond with a subliminal solution. (Aedan)

Figure 4.10

Primary Action Dimension of Seeking Subliminal



Twelve of the 22 participants spent a portion of the interview within this dimension, which they represented through narrative terms that reflected an interaction with their psychological dimensions, as well. Therefore, "Seeking Subliminal" was an action dimension in which the psychological dimensions of "Who I Am," "Who and What I Know," and "What I Can" could balance their ideal states while *Holding Self* in response to TWB so that the mission sustained. The following sections will explore two conditions, three processes, and three consequences for "Seeking Subliminal."

Conditions for Seeking Subliminal. Conditions are factors catalyzing responses and processes within a dimension (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Two significant conditions emerged

within “Seeking Subliminal.” “The Game” related to perceptions of how politics and power influenced the toxic personality and their behavior. “What’s Worth It” emerged as a perception of whether responding in various ways was worth the likely outcome. These conditions for action also constituted psychological processes. The conditions in this section are told in processual narratives because recognizing them as conditions created the catalyst for response.

Condition of Seeking Subliminal—The Game. Participants referenced “The Game” as a dynamic in which inhibiting bureaucracy and toxic power were the norm. TWB was merely a microcosm of this phenomenon:

> There's always just some politics or whatever, bureaucratic frictions between different interests. It's not realistic to think you'll have just a Nirvana work environment with no level of noise or friction or conflict. (Loess)

Within “Seeking Subliminal,” “The Game” was played on a large field with many players. The participant was one. How they perceived “The Game” established boundaries, allies, and within the core condition of “Sensing Opportunities,” what they could do:

> The first thing you do is you never let them know what you're thinking. They see, "Okay, I can come to this guy again because he's actually trying to protect me so I can achieve my goal." (Aedan)

“The Game” was not static but shape-shifting, as personnel changed on teams, new superiors emerged, and the IC formed and reformed organizations. Thus, “The Game” was a set of ordinary rules played within extraordinary circumstances:

> Who else might see this note? How long is this going to trail me? Is there harm to an individual? And sometimes just let it go if there was no clear strategic reason to continue to push. (Maria)

Embedded in Maria’s insight was a second condition of “Seeking Subliminal,” one in which “The Game” interacted perceptions of power and risk: “What’s Worth It.”

Condition of Seeking Subliminal—What’s Worth It. The condition of “What’s Worth It” references the risk associated with some outcome over others. “What’s Worth It” was a process of comparing the participant’s power to the toxic personality’s:

> So eventually it just got to the point where the juice wasn't worth the squeeze. (Rico)

> Is the point really worth it? Or is it more of an inconvenience? (Maria)

However, judging whether responding was “worth it” also placed boundaries on the toxic personality, which created situational awareness for the participant about how to protect themselves:

> I didn't give him the opportunity to turn that ire on me. (Celine)

While “What’s Worth It” defined power, it also defined levels of risk to that participant’s career and life choices. This awareness not only impacted responses to TWB but also how one would position themselves in relation to toxic personalities in the future. Less risk translated into assessing “What I Can.” The next section will explore processes for “Seeking Subliminal” that enabled them to project this power.

Processes for Seeking Subliminal. Processes for “Seeking Subliminal” included methods for maneuvering around toxic personalities and their enablers. Using strategies and tactics such as “Adapting and Soldiering,” “Walking It Off,” and “Finding Others,” intelligence officers described processes designed for agility and goal accomplishment in which they often used the TWB to their advantage. The following section will discuss these processes.

***Process for Seeking Subliminal—Adapting and Soldiering*.** As a process for “Seeking Subliminal,” “Adapting and Soldiering” included tactics in which participants maneuvered and shifted to remain in their ideal mission state. The process was dispassionate and a calculated enactment of “What I Can.” However, adapting relied upon the participant’s ability to understand the toxic personality’s goal:

> To me, being able to understand how that person operates allows me to adapt for that. I can manage my expectations. (Jason)

The process was not limited to understanding and managing the toxic personality. “Adapting and Soldiering” required activating “Who I Am” and “What I Can” to choose the optimal time to respond:

> I held back on supporting the transformation in my prior role for fear of dealing with the toxic personality. I quietly advocated for it until I got into this role. I altered my tactics. (Kelly)

"Adapting and Soldiering" also included shifting the circumstances of the toxic personality toward some optimal state for the mission. This process revealed itself in two nuances of "What I Can," including out-maneuvering the TWB:

> It was like, "Well, I beat her to the punch." (Loess)

> We just provided that person an opportunity to excel elsewhere and made it seem like it was their idea. (Ben)

Maneuverability within "Adapting and Soldiering" relied upon effective use of the acumen inherent in "Who and What I Know" to soldier on to maintain their own performance:

> You just soldier on, I guess. I probably was more involved in the more prominent topics, so I had to navigate through the swamp. I personally checked out of the situation mentally. (Loess)

"Adapting and Soldiering" enabled participants to hold "self" by shifting their circumstances. Analysis of the interview data also a showed a complex balance in which participants minimized the impact of the emotions within "I Felt . . ." and the shock of "Upside Down" through an efficient and dispassionate management of choices. "Walking It Off" was key to calculus.

Process for Seeking Subliminal—Walking It Off. "Walking It Off" reflected physical and psychological separation from the toxic circumstances in the "moment" to sustain self-concepts and optimal performance. Efforts to manage the "I Felt . . ." and "Upside Down" core conditions were prominent in this process:

> I would take walks to cool down if I needed to. In a few situations, I would just hold onto an email I knew I needed to respond to for a day, maybe two just so I made sure that I wasn't responding from a position of anger or frustration. (Finn)

"Walking It Off" was not a process in which participants stored away toxic events into some compartmented denial. Rather, they compartmented them into forethought and action:

> Think about it, go eat, maybe have a glass of wine. Try to sleep if I could, and maybe I couldn't sleep. But think on it, ruminate. (Maria)

> If you didn't stop to do that a couple of times a day if needed, you could find yourself in trouble because you'd just boil over. (Lamar)

"Walking It Off" included management of internal reaction as precursor to external response. As with "Adapting and Soldiering," "Walking It Off" activated assessments of agency to hold "self." A third process of "Seeking Subliminal" relied upon "Who and What I Know" most prominently as the foundation of response to TWB: "Finding Others."

Process for Seeking Subliminal—Finding Others. Within the primary psychological dimension of "Who and What I Know," participants reflected on the importance of networks in choosing how to respond:

> I would use whatever network I have to try to get moved from where I'm going [redacted] to a different place. I would try to pull something like that. (Joel)

Finding others also relied on the acumen to play "The Game." However, "Finding Others" also included intentionally aligning with like-minded others:

> Those people tended to sort of find each other, or people would reference each other. (Ben)

"Finding Others" also included forward-leaning decisions to help the organization manage TWB more effectively:

> The ultimate reason why I started that women's group was because there were two majors standing in the hallway complaining to each other. I had gotten to know each of the two majors individually, but I just stopped to see how they are doing, and they were both complaining about this similar thing. So, I had my own networking. (Kelly)

"Adapting and Soldiering," "Walking It Off," and "Finding Others" leveraged use of the primary psychological conditions to maximize control over toxic circumstances. The goal for participants within this dimension was to maneuver effectively to steady the mission. The following section will explore consequences of "Seeking Subliminal."

Consequences of the Seeking Subliminal Dimension. Within grounded theory, consequences reflect causality within the theoretical model. They are the outcomes from action within conditions unique to that dimension (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). As an ideal state, "Seeking Subliminal" generally related to outcomes that were positive for the participant and potentially

steadying for the mission. This section will discuss the following consequences: “Learned Lessons,” “Mission Gets Done,” and “Don’t Have to Be Here”:

***Consequence of Seeking Subliminal—Lessons Learned*.** As an ideal state of *Holding Self*, the “Seeking Subliminal” primary dimension required the perspective to assess threads of victory within losses as participants recognized positive lessons and outcomes from experiences with TWB. In many cases, they parlayed the ability to observe the toxic personality’s behavior to evaluate their own:

> My very first branch chief, I don't have a lot of positive things to say about, not because she was a terrible person or anything. I try to take a lesson from everybody. I think that it's one of the things. (Dana)

Others drew on lessons learned from their own unproductive behavior in the past:

> Earlier in my career, I had gotten myself into some trouble with just blasting out emails when I felt a particular way. I really didn't want that to happen again. (Finn)

Participants also gained empathy from having been the targets of TWB. In these circumstances, they reflected Mead’s (1934) “I versus me” in an ability to see their pain in others.

> If I ever saw anybody treated like that, I don't care what it would cost me to be the one to stand up for them. I would not let anybody be treated like that. (Dana)

“Learning Lessons” as a consequence of “Seeking Subliminal” gifted greater awareness and empathy, which supported *Holding Self*. Holding onto self-concepts becomes a simpler process when they are identities and self-images that one accepts. To paraphrase Dana (2020), the “hard point” in her career made her better. The more fundamental question is what did these lessons mean for the mission? As discussed in the next section, the mission moved forward, at least in the short-term.

***Consequence of Seeking Subliminal—The Mission Win*s.** During the interviews, participant commitment to the mission was a palatable consequence of “Seeking Subliminal.” Adapting, soldiering, maneuvering, walking away, and building networks were tactics for success:

> I don't want to spend a lot of time talking about, if we got to build a widget, let's build a widget. So, let's figure it out and try to find something that's workable for both of you, and if it's not, workable for both of us. (Rico)

Some were able to draw a direct link between consequences and processes:

> I just keep moving forward like, “Oh, that didn’t work. Let’s try something else.” Being emotional wasn't going to improve the Chief’s leadership ability. (Kelly)

“Seeking Subliminal” was an ideal dimension that centered on elevated accomplishment. However, while the dimension may have fostered the mission in the short term, elevating mission objectives in ways that overshadowed the “self” may not have been positive for the IC. Participants left organizations, intentionally truncated careers, and even left the mission. The next section will examine this dynamic through the consequence of “Don’t Need to Be Here.”

***Consequence of Seeking Subliminal— Don’t Have to Be Here*.** Because intelligence officers spend approximately one-third of their time in their workplaces, one would expect an ideal state would include choices contributing to peace in that environment. However, for some, peace came with an awareness that they did not need to be in the IC anymore:

> I was like, well, this dream is dead. It was made very clear to me by a coworker. I was like, "Well, I don't need to be here anymore then." (Natalie)

However, psychologically separating oneself from the toxic environment had a catch. When intelligence officers left their areas of expertise, they suffered the loss of separation from work they valued. Additionally, the IC lost the investment into their experiential development:

> When I left there, I completely shut door on that mission. I was done. I was there, had golden years, had a great time. I felt it was marred by that whole experience with her, and I didn't want to go back. Ever. (Dana)

Summary. Thus, “Don’t Need to Be Here” marked a turn for “Seeking Subliminal” because “subliminal” for the participant became incongruent with “subliminal” for the long-term mission. While “Seeking Subliminal” fostered the mission, resources expended to adapt and soldier, walk it off, and find others often taxed some to the point where “the game” became “not worth it.” Thus, while “Seeking Subliminal” functioned as an ideal dimension in context, that

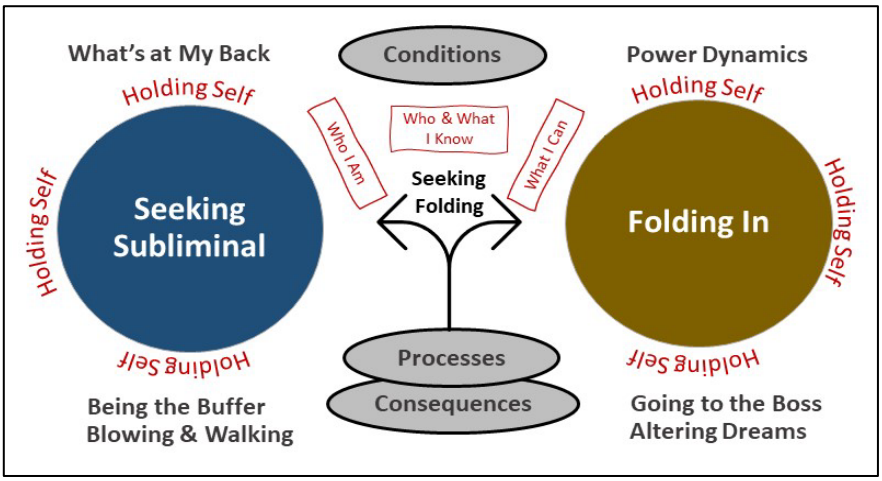
context was fundamentally suboptimal. This suboptimal condition formed a pathway to the next dimension, the inter-dimension of "Seeking-Folding."

Interim Dimension of Holding Self—Seeking-Folding

Inter-dimensions function as bi-directional transit points between primary dimensions. "Seeking-Folding" transited between "Seeking Subliminal" and a second primary action dimension, "Folding In," to be discussed in a subsequent section. As illustrated in Figure 4.11, "Seeking-Folding" contained two conditions that functioned as barriers to responding effectively to TWB in the intelligence environment: "What's at My Back" and "Power Dynamics":

Figure 4.11

Seeking-Folding Inter-Dimension Elements



Condition of Seeking-Folding—What's at My Back. "What's at My Back" as a condition framed the environmental support available to the participant. This condition elevated the psychological dimensions of *Holding Self* as participants sought to maintain self-concepts in interaction with support structures and what they had the capability to do. The condition was also a perceptual framework in which awareness about the goals of others in the environment became critical:

> I'd rather be in a combat zone because at least the enemy on the other side of the wire doesn't hide the fact that they want to do me harm, right? (Lamar)

Not knowing what was at one's back facilitated a transition from "Seeking Subliminal" by way of uncertainty. However, the uncertainty about who had the participant's "back" consisted of a confluence of relational and institutional factors. Teammates who were not the source of the

TWB but who modeled or enabled the behavior from the periphery played significant roles. Political agendas formed toxic parochialism.

One's position in relation to structures and others in the environment defined formal authority:

> I was team leader at the time. It really wasn't that difficult because there was no love lost between these two people. (Rico)

But not necessarily perceptions of power:

> I would try to defend our guys a little bit more, but still in the back of my mind, I didn't have full courage to be able to just completely step up and help people out. (Zeke)

Consequently, formal position did not bestow power. Rather, the meaning intelligence officers assigned to "What's at My Back" did. The next condition of "Seeking-Folding" defined how those perceptions impacted the ability to affect toxic circumstances.

***Condition of Seeking-Folding—Power Dynamics*.** Power in organizations emerges in various forms of formal and referential power to influence circumstances (French & Raven, 1959; Raven, 1964). Power was present in all dimensions of the mode, most acutely in the agency of "What I Can." Like "Sensing Opportunities," "Power Dynamics" as a condition found meaning in relation to others:

> I did not want to ram heads with the organizational power dynamics of a retired male [position redacted] versus a woman that had not been embraced. Like I was not welcome there at all. (Margaret)

Fifteen of the 20 participants held positions of formal power at the time of the interview, although the toxic experiences they explored commonly occurred earlier in their careers. Only two had never held "referential power" as a senior or team lead. For those in a position to lead others either formally or referentially, "Power Dynamics" became a definition for defending others in the toxic environment and part of the calculus of whether they led well:

> This issue isn't just about me. It's about the many others who are also like me, who are a part of this whole process or this whole community. (Mike)

Like all conditions, “Power Dynamics” relied upon some element of process to understand the contextual boundaries. These processes, in turn, offered meaning. The following section will discuss processes for enacting within “Seeking-Folding.”

Processes of Seeking-Folding. “Seeking-Folding” as an inter-dimension included three processes: “Being the Buffer,” “Blowing and Walking,” and “Altering Dreams.” Each process became a pivoting half-measure that emerged longitudinally when participants found the search for “subliminal” falling short. This section will discuss each process as a catalyst for inter-dimensional consequences.

Process of Seeking-Folding—Being the Buffer. Participants positioned themselves as buffers between the toxic personality and others to facilitate collaboration and mission continuity. This process was particularly acute among intelligence officers who held formal or referential power. For some participants, the process was a dialogical or psychological wall:

> I used my own power to try to keep a positive environment, if you will, and to downplay the negative things. (David)

I discussed the controversies related to the roles played by toxic buffers or toxic handlers in Chapter 2. This study did not evaluate the short-term versus long-term effects of toxic buffering. However, the value of the data here may have illustrated a critical junction point between the two perspectives. Simply, critical mission environments like the IC experience significant risk around short-term impacts from uncommunicative team members and hostile environments, which may balance concerns about the long-term organizational. For Zeke, buffering was fundamental to the ability of the team to work together:

> I was the only person that had to deal with them. So that made it easier for them. I became a buffer for the rest of the team once that move was made. Productivity and everybody's attitude and everything like that picked up. (Zeke)

While buffering was primarily the purview of those with formal or referential power to manage resources, participants who were either subordinate to the toxic personality or otherwise unable to influence the individual’s behavior engaged in two other processes. These

processes involved managing the one resource they could control: their engagement with and attitudes toward the work of being intelligence officers. The next section discusses one of these processes: “Blowing and Walking.”

Process of Seeking-Folding—Blowing and Walking. In “Seeking Subliminal,” participants explored “Walking It Off” as processes to temporarily remove themselves from the toxic environment and recalibrate for a positive outcome. “Blowing and Walking” emerged in lost composure, often before temporarily exiting the toxic environment. These moments typically came after extended periods of TWB and the participant could no longer see an alternative:

> I started crying because I was so mad about it. It was the blow up. I walked out, and it was one of the most frustrating things ever. (Dana)

Earlier in this chapter, “Owning the Other” was a core condition of *Holding Self* in which sociodemographic status was present throughout the interaction with the toxic environment. In this inter-dimension, “Blowing and Walking” interacted with “Owning the Other” for African American males to create a dichotomy so that “Blowing” created risk that “Walking” did not:

> I'm a 6'3”, 235-pounds black man. Because of everything that comes with it, now I'm aggressive. I knew, “If you even move, you're done.” (Lamar)

> There are times when someone who is in a majority can say something a certain way, and it'll be, “Oh, that's just him. That's how he talks.” I can say the exact same thing, and it could be deemed as hostile. (Ben)

In this way, the power-stripping impact of TWB among intelligence officers interacted with the perceived power deficit already in the environment from “Owning the Other.” This confluence conditioned African American male participants to voice anger through silence and withdrawal. Removing themselves from the environment afforded plausible deniability in place of the emotional authenticity to which Caucasian counterparts were entitled by not being the “other”:

> I immediately excused myself and left the meeting and stated that the excuse was I had to go pick up my son. (Mike)

Participants in each group expressed satisfaction in their choices of response. However, the use of overt voice, versus silence or absence as voice, illustrated separate dimensions of empowerment depending on whether the goal was power over something rather than protection from something. The Caucasian females and males, as well as African American females expressed satisfaction in the form of regaining power over the source of the behavior. Alternatively, Mike's use of "the excuse was" (Mike) was less focused on projecting power over the toxic personality than projecting power over self-concepts with the least risk.

Like "Being the Buffer," "Blowing and Walking" was a process that transitioned between the "Seeking Subliminal" and "Folding In" dimensions. The process functioned as proverbial highway interchanges as participants responded to fluid circumstances and power that challenged self-concepts. A final interim process, "Altering Dreams," presented another process interchange around career trajectories.

Process of Seeking-Folding—Altering Dreams. Related to the consequence of "I Don't Need to Be Here" in "Seeking Subliminal," "Altering Dreams" is an inter-dimensional process of recalibrating career objectives due to experiences with TWB. "Altering Dreams" straddled the consequential line because self-concepts and former career plans became less compatible:

> The biggest thing I've come to peace with, if I never get promoted again . . . it was a good run. (Ben)

And a source of loss:

> From a work standpoint, the two experiences that I've had have altered my dreams and goals at work. For many years, I stopped caring about career advancement. After you have a professionally disruptive, hostile experience, you have to think twice before you want to be part of that club. (Gwen)

Within the "Seeking Subliminal" consequence of "I Don't Need to Be Here," participants found subliminal in leaving for environments more compatible with self-concepts. Alternatively, "Altering Dreams" was a process of *Holding Self* that compromised their potential as future IC leaders. Thus, as "Don't Need to Be Here" marked a turn in which the subliminal may have

contributed to negative impacts to mission in the long-term, “Altering Dreams” solidified that negative turn.

Process for Seeking-Folding—Went to the Boss. “Went to the Boss” activated “Who and What I Know” into the external environment in the form of decisions to seek redress, either behavior from senior leaders or compliance organizations within their entities. The process reflected expectations of organizational support and varied perspectives on the locus of the TWB.

Seeking support from those with formal power over the toxic personality was a common first step in “Went to the Boss.” However, participants framed the process as inherently futile or that only led to more conflict with the toxic personality:

> I went to the deputy at the time, and he wanted me to go apologize. I was like, “Absolutely fricking not. Not happening. Fire me. I don't care.” (Dana)

> It was perceived as I was going there to try to either get him to do something about it or get her fired. Obviously, I didn't get the results I wanted. (David)

Participants also sought redress from various regulatory compliance organizations, such as the Inspector General’s Office (IG), the Equal Employment Opportunity Division (EEOD), or Human Resources (HR). As with efforts to enlist advocacy from those in formal power over the toxic personality, participants framed these choices as unsatisfying:

> This guy went out of his way to get back at me. I finally went to the IG and [then] I went to EEO, and then I still got no relief. (Eve)

> I did go to the IG to raise the issue, but I did not get a confidence-building reply. To me, it seemed like the IG office just didn't want to pursue it. (Loess)

The burden of these processes became a tax on the core mission as redress procedures dominated time and considerations about what the effort is worth:

> It is a horror process and people may not have the resources or the money to do it or they don't want the headache. Then that becomes part of the issue. But what people fail to realize is that if you start to action documented behavior or stuff that you have on paper, then the burden is on them to do otherwise. So, that's where I'm at, people thought I was going to take the agency to court. I go, “No, this one's not worth it.” (Mike)

For the participants functioning within the “Seeking-Folding” inter-dimension, perceptions on whether the responses empowered or diminished the “self” interacted with expectations for institutional or leadership support in the “What’s at My Back” condition. Therefore, the experience of going to the boss influenced whether the participant returned to “Seeking Subliminal” or moved on to “Folding In.” The decision that resulted from this process became the outcome of the inter-dimension. Returning to “Seeking Subliminal” relied upon the acumen to understand what would work and the agency to determine a course of action:

> A lot of people want to really just stay committed to the certain field they work . . . and then they put up with stuff like that, even if it is a high level of unnecessary and unprofessional toxicity. I've kind of dug in my heels but also eventually just departed the office for another assignment in a new unit being formed. (Loess)

Summary. The tensions inherent in the inter-dimensions centered on choices of response. Choices to (re)enter “Seeking Subliminal” included decisions to stay and maneuver or to leave for non-toxic environments. Entering the next primary dimension of “Folding In” included re-ordering oneself to minimize interaction with the toxic circumstances. As we will see from the following discussion on “Folding In,” the choice to enter that dimension incurred a social cost on the participant in terms of relationships that extended beyond that with the toxic personality into broader relationships. “Folding In” also incurred a cost to the mission because processes related to “Folding In” reduced participant contributions to the mission. The following section will discuss conditions, processes, and consequences of the “Folding In.”

Primary Action Dimension of Holding Self: Folding In

“Folding In” is a primary action dimension of *Holding Self* in which intelligence officers withdrew from teammates, supervisors, stakeholders, career trajectories, and mission obligations as a response to TWB. Gwen inspired the name of the dimension when she said:

> You just fold in on yourself. (Gwen)

In 20 interviews supporting the grounded theory and situational analysis segments of the study, participants used the word “mission” 158 times. These references to the mission indicate that mission support extended beyond vocation into the realm of life purpose:

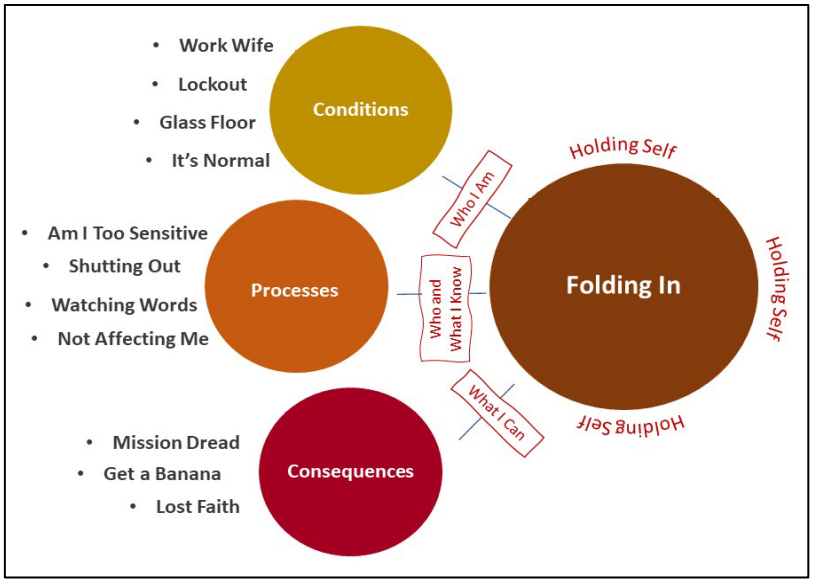
> I didn’t want my behavior to affect the mission. (Finn)
>
> What is the why? People first. Mission always. (Dana)
>
> I came here for the mission. (Natalie)

Within this mindset, self-concepts and the mission became intertwined so that reducing support to the mission by “Folding In” was a counterintuitive form of diminishing a part of oneself while trying to hold onto it.

The following discussion explores “Folding In” as a dimension for responding to TWB in the intelligence environment. Each participant in the grounded theory portion of the study spent some time in this dimension, although they may have placed themselves predominately in the other two primary dimensions. The conditions, processes, and consequences of “Folding In” are illustrated in Figure 4.12 and discussed below.

Figure 4.12

“Folding In” Primary Action Dimension and Dimensional Elements



Conditions of Folding In. Earlier in this chapter, I explored “Owning the Other” as a core condition of *Holding Self* in which self-concepts as “the other” influenced responses to TWB. Within “Folding In,” reflected appraisals of being a woman transpired as a targeted condition in “Work Wife.” “Lockout” represented interpersonal and institutional barriers.

"Glass Floors" represented an alternative universe in which subordinates had outsized power relative to their supervisors. Finally, "It's Normal" reflected perceptions that TWB had become normalized. This section will review those three conditions:

***Condition of Folding In—Work Wife*:** Being a "Work Wife" was a segment of "Owning the Other" among female participants. Within "Folding In," women felt diminished when men talked over them, questioned their competence, or shouted them down in ways that male colleagues appeared exempt. The condition elevated gender as a "support" identity that intersected with broader self-concepts and institutional power:

> I've had two times where, someone called me their "work wife," and I was livid. (Kit)

> There is definitely a sexist culture at [agency redacted] where women have to kind of in their own way be more demure and polite and ask for permission to participate. (Margaret)

The dynamic became elevated in meetings and other group forums where acceptance of the female voice reflected a referendum on the content of the work and her:

> He would almost verbally berate one of the young, enlisted military members on our team. Tell her she shouldn't speak out of turn, on a team where we had never held to those norms. (Celine)

Male participants positioned themselves as empathetic witnesses to the behavior:

> That is more common I think than anything, is just men in our organization speaking over women. (Ben)

As discussed in Chapter 2, the IC remains a predominately white male ecosystem. The power of numbers and institutional influence translate into appraisals of expertise as legitimacy. "Work Wife" conditioned a complex dynamic between female competence as a construct and whether specific females were competent, even among other women:

> I was selected. A number of people tell me that I was only selected because I was a woman or that my aptitude had nothing to do with it. That had really frustrated me because of some of the people that it was coming from, most of them were obviously women. (Celine)

However, "Work Wife" also risked being characterized as a "pushy broad":

> “She's pushy. She thinks she's a boss.” He felt personally offended by my professional engagement style. Right in the middle of it, [he] goes, "Hey listen, listen, I need you to stop talking because you've already talked enough. It was a microaggression because you were associating the negative stereotype that women talk too much with the fact that I was doing the recap, which was within my professional purview. (Margaret)

In the intersectionality of identity, African American women experienced “Work Wife” through African American males who warned them against becoming “pushy black broads.” This permutation on “Work Wife” catalyzed activation of the “Who I Am” primary psychological dimension:

> He pulled me over and he's older. And he [said], “I'm telling you this because I consider you to be a friend, but you're killing yourself.” He was basically saying that people in the class hated me because I was so vocal. I thought about it. At first I was like, “Okay, well maybe I should just stop talking.” And [then] I was, well, “That's not in my nature.” (Kit)

Thus, “Work Wife” constructed a condition in which female participants experienced tension between holding the authentic “self” when institutional expectations for their positions contravened norms. The condition was a relegation of status to some lower place. As a condition of “Folding In,” “Work Wife” interacted with a second condition: “Lockout.”

***Condition of Folding In—Lockout*:** “Lockout” is a condition of “Folding In” in which participants experienced interpersonal or institutional barriers to functioning as intelligence officers amid toxic events.

> It would have been the actual, like, “I don't work for you, fuck off. I don't owe you any information and I'm not going to give it to you.” It's a lockout. It's being locked out from your work. (Margaret)

“Lockout” traversed complex elements, including feeling disenfranchised, passive barriers, and perceptions of having to tolerate TWB due to mission requirements. For example, participants explored locked out of ownership of their contributions to the mission:

> It was disenfranchising me because it was my work and research that was being published by someone else to help someone else. This person has always moved ahead on the backs of other people. (Christina)

However, to be disenfranchised, one must have a franchise to lose. As discussed in Chapter 2, the uncertainty and ambiguities related to functioning as an intelligence officer manifests in an environment in which:

> There is very little we do in the intelligence community that one person does. (Zeke)

Also noted was the impact that a lack of adversarial feedback challenged determining whether intelligence analysis and operations were "right." While team and interorganizational collaboration became integral to intelligence success, intelligence products often carried the name of a single analyst, which framed a competitive environment within which bonuses and promotions are determined:

> I think the nature of what we do for a living lends itself to inadvertent competition. Your performance ratings are oftentimes tied to your production, even though supervisors will make caveats that say, "Oh, we're not bean counting," when in actuality, in a lot of cases, they are. (Christina)

In the quote by Christina to open this section, she wrapped gender, referential status of the female team lead, female senior analyst, as well as the male recipient moving ahead "on the backs of others" (Christina) before moving the condition into a broader situation that African Americans perceived as normative in the workplace:

> I was being divested of my work, like I would work and other people would get the credit for it. This whole country is built on the fact that black people work hard, and we don't get credit for the work that we do. (Kit)

Intelligence officers also reflected upon "Lockout" in the form of passive barriers as a condition of "Folding In." In this study, barriers were invisible, but no less insurmountable, distracting, and time-consuming:

> I kept redesigning my project, and it just kept getting shot down. Nothing would work. Nothing improved the situation. I'm like, yeah, they're just all lying and pretending because what we do actually really doesn't matter and it's really not that cool, and I just felt like a complete fraud. (Natalie)

> There's a lot of red ink by the clique members to the point [that you get] the sense they have a deliberate goal of making sure they stop the paper from being published. (Loess)

"Lockout" also surfaced as nail-studded interpersonal exchanges:

> He was talking to himself under their comments, and saying, "We're never going to listen to that. That's stupid. That's a waste of time. I don't know why I'm here. I'm wasting my time. It was effectively just stonewalling for three and a half months. (Celine)

Participants also referenced so-called “gotcha games” as passive barriers designed to ensure victory by highlighting participant failure:

> I've seen people intentionally be condescending to folks, play the gotcha game where they ask you a question that they know the answer to, but they're looking to see how you are going to answer it. (Zeke)

> Anything to damage my reputation. Can’t have an open phone conversation. People are looking for something. It makes me anxious and alone. (Kelly)

“Lockout” contributed to isolation and fear within teams. However, the barriers were predominately among colleagues. The next condition of “Folding In” was unique to first-line supervisory intelligence officers who faced toxic subordinates. The next section discusses this condition of “Folding In”: “Glass Floors.”

Condition of Folding In—Glass Floor. The ambiguities of referential power, relationships, and access to intelligence framed by institutional controls have created a condition within the primary dimension of “Folding In” among supervisors and managers referred to here as “Glass Floor.” In the simplest terms, intelligence supervisors explored experiences with toxic subordinates who had outsized power with teammates, senior leaders, and others due to perceptions of expertise, physical proximity, and special relationships. This outsized power forced participants into supervising through proverbial glass floors with minimal influence over the activities of toxic subordinates or others loyal to them because special relationships formed barriers:

> She always used that relationship with the deputy director as an excuse. When she started working for me, I was trying to figure out, "What are you working on? What are you doing?" "Oh, well, I can't tell you. I'll get you a one-time read-in.” [She would say,] “Well, the deputy direct told me to do this. If you have a problem with it, you’ve got to go to him and talk." She had a lot of influence at the leadership level. (Liam)

Participants did not reference secrecy and compartmentalization as a condition of any dimension of *Holding Self.* However, toxic personalities use whatever tools of power they have

available to achieve their goals. Secrecy is a necessary paradox of intelligence as a business. As a condition of the environment, segmenting intelligence impedes the collaboration the IC relies upon to service the mission. However, without that parsing of information, access to everything by everyone would also risk including U.S. adversaries in the "everyone" class (Johnston, 2005). Like "coopetition" discussed in Chapter 2, whether secrecy, access, and relationships fostered or impeded the mission relied upon a counterbalanced focus on team that was sensitive to intent and leadership modeling:

> You can call it out, you can deal with it formally. But when nobody knows who's got the boss' ear, now all of a sudden, your power is sapped. (David)

The "Glass Floor" was not a condition strictly tied to access to leadership. Frameworks such as remote and hybrid teams in which senior analysts had more influence with team members than supervisors also challenged the ability of managers to break through the floor:

> It wasn't just me. It was the other managers too. The toxicity between the management and the teams was so that I felt that I had to tiptoe around and really be choosy with my words so as to not make people upset. [It was] really ineffective and even more frustrating. (Finn)

"Work Wife," "Lockout," and "Glass Floor" as conditions of "Folding In" catalyzed the withdrawal from effective response to TWB among these intelligence officers. The next section will explore experiences from inside the "Folding In" action dimension through the processes of "Shutting Out," "Watching Words," and "Not Affecting Me." Insights into how the folding process emerged in the experiences of intelligence officers will be followed with a discussion of consequences and impact to the intelligence environment from "Folding In."

***Condition of Folding-In—It's Normal*.** "It's Normal" is a condition within the "Folding In" in which participants framed toxicity within their organizations as normative. Rather than anomalous or deviant, TWB was a by-product of personality and culture:

> You tend to think that it's just normal and the way the organization itself is. (Gwen)

For some intelligence officers, TWB had become so normalized that it was no longer recognized as destructive. In a permutation of the "Owning the Other" category of "Who and

What I Am," participants in two organizations explored ways in which this normalization had emerged into "Mafia"-like micro-cultures of inclusion and exclusion, particularly for gendered and ethnic minorities:

> There's something that I would like to term the [redacted] mafia. They can be forceful and aggressive and almost bullying in a way, they're respected more so by the [redacted] than say, someone like me who can't grow beard. I'm [also] looked down on because I'm a minority. Further, there was a distinct division between the intelligence analysts, who were mostly white, and the [redacted] analysts, who were mostly brown. (Kit)

> I laid it out for her, and she said, "Oh, you have met the junior officer mafia. They like to do this. Especially with civilian employees, especially civilian women. They like to kind of mess with us. You're just going to have to find a way around it." It happened so often they had a nickname for it. It had a playbook. (Margaret)

Some participants imagined a long-term impact on the younger intelligence officers whose workplace behaviors had not yet formed and who would develop anti-organizational attitudes from seeing TWB unchallenged. However, normalization of TWB also emerged as a comfortable place for participants who had long histories of defending themselves against destructive forms of conflict:

> If you've done that since you were 11 till you were early 20s, I don't know, maybe it probably gives you a sense of not necessarily viewing conflict as some abnormal situation that you just can't endure any degree of, if that makes sense. (Loess)

Intelligence officers functioning within the "Folding In" primary dimension recognized the destructiveness of "Work Wife," "Lockout," and the "Glass Floor" as conditioning structures for TWB. However, as the next section will illustrate, normalization created a perception that the phenomenon was accepted by the institution. In turn, participants developed a set of processes to protect themselves. The following section discusses processes for "Folding In."

Processes of Folding In. Processes of "Folding In" included efforts to withdraw from the toxic circumstances. Rather than physically leaving the organization or team in with the TWB exists, "Folding In" processes were proximal and psychological:

> You fold in on yourself because you're not sure if that's going to happen again, and you don't want it to happen more than once ever. (Gwen)

Four distinct processes emerged among participants within dimension. “Am I too sensitive?” represented initial questions about whether they were the problem. “Shutting Out” and “Watching Words” were avoidance measures to shield themselves physically and/or psychologically. Thus, “Shutting Out” and “Watching Words” began in the psychological realm and projected onto the operational environment. “Not Affecting Me” represented efforts to justify avoidance with arguments that their performance never suffered, even as the subsequent discussion on “Folding In” consequences suggests that it did. Participants “folded into” processes in various ways in relation to circumstances, tolerance, and agency. “Folding In” processes also implied a longitudinal progression. This section discusses these processes as intelligence officer responses to TWB as they “Folded In.”

Process of Folding In—Am I Too Sensitive? Participants described processes of “Folding In” in which they questioned whether they were misinterpreting the toxic personalities’ intensions and/or behaviors:

> It made me wonder sometimes, "Am I the one dismissing something? Am I being too sensitive?” (Zeke)

> Then I would have conversations with my peers, just telling them, “Hey, can you just pay attention, to make sure that I wasn't going crazy.” I didn't think I was, but they were paying attention, and they were like, “Yeah, I see it.” (Ben)

“Am I Too Sensitive?” reflected a desire to assume positive motives on behalf of supervisors and teammates on whom the participant relied:

> I really gave it the benefit of the doubt as long as I could. Then you're at an impasse until somebody goes, "Oh, I must be mistaken," which was usually me during the confusion phase. I mean, to realize I wasn't crazy. (Natalie)

However, even as they began to resolve conflicts over whether the TWB was merely a mirage, some intelligence officers reported feeling obligated to abide leaders and others by playing along:

> I had to listen to him in a professional way because I'm a professional. It was a challenge. I felt toxic people in the whole mix. (Margaret)

In Ben's words, these processes elevated the "Folding In" conditions of "He Had Fans" and "Silence":

> People were made to feel like they didn't experience certain things. People came forward to complain, share their angst, and a lot of people were silenced. (Ben)

"Am I Too Sensitive" began as an effort to extend positive motives and expectations into the toxic environment. They became aware but within an environment in which they interpreted efforts by others to target the participant as the confused outlier. The next set of processes will explore reactions to this awareness as participants described psychological and action processes to shield themselves from the toxic environment.

Process of Folding In—Shutting Out. Participants described "Folding In" processes in which they sought to distance themselves physically, psychologically, or both from the TWB. The term "avoid" was common as participants described "Shutting Out" processes that were psychological barriers projected onto the operational space:

> I had tried to shut her out. I had tried to avoid and do all the different things. (Dana)

> I would avoid him, if at all possible. Once I'd gotten to the building, if I found out he wasn't going to be there that day, then that day was going to be better. (Zeke)

Psychological barriers formed as they described creating parsimonious sub-processes for when to "speak" to the toxic personality and when shield with silence:

> There were quite a few that I didn't speak to for years after that. Honestly, I only spoke to them professionally. I never went by their desk to shoot the breeze or to see how they were doing or anything like that. If I needed something, or if they needed something, we spoke. (Ben)

The concept of "distance" emerged in complex ways within "Shutting Out" as calculated efforts to alter work roles from assigned duties became tools for avoidance:

> I'll let it flow. I'll just stop talking to them . . .Basically, I chose to do that. I found a way, and I just did whatever. (Eve)

Eve never left the team. She merely began working on solitary projects of her choice outside of the team mission. Thus, her "exit" gave her psychological distance from the toxic environment. Other participants referenced physical distance from toxic personalities as elements of relief:

> It was the one positive that I had. Because of my work role, I could not sit in the office with the rest of the [organization redacted]. I still had to kind of interact with him. (Christina)

> It was very easy [for me] to avoid that person, extremely easy. Whereas, for the people on the watch floor now, they work with this person. They're five feet away from him at all times. That's different. (Joel)

Chapter 2 discussed the common use of hybrid and cross-organization teams to address fluid intelligence requirements. Additionally, deployments, promotions, Joint Duty Assignments (JDAs), and a continual flow of job opportunities create a work environment in a continual state of flux. Consequently, the ability to leverage physical proximity from the toxic environment was a form of privilege for some participants and not others. The mission does not always allow sitting apart or long periods of operational breathing space. Those who could not leverage physical distance chose psychological measures through "Watching Words."

***Process of Folding In—Watching Words*.** Participants who could not extricate from the toxic personality reported becoming hypervigilant in their words, actions, and engagement:

> I feel like I'm always watched. I have to make sure I don't mess up. A lot of pressure. (Kelly)

These responses emerged not only when working directly with the toxic personality but whenever they were in the environment. Notably, participants linked "Watching Words" with challenges associated with *Holding Self*:

> Every decision comes with an assumption, and it gets to the point where I try not to be as outspoken as I normally am because it carries retribution. (Mike)

> I try to be careful with my words anyway, but when dealing with him, being even more careful about what I said and how I said it. (Zeke)

Within the “Folding In” condition of the “Glass Floor,” participants who were supervisors managed conflicts with *Holding Self* by skewing management practices toward avoiding difficult exchanges with the toxic personalities rather than toward best practices to foster the mission:

> I was always apologizing for the way that I worded something, and it's just silly. I would tend to give better feedback to people I knew wouldn't get mad to receive it. So, it just snowballed that way. (Finn)

Participants also became hypervigilant in documenting actions to shield themselves from the toxic personality, and, quite possibly, sources of support they might have within the condition of “He Had Fans”:

> And frankly, it was the one-time in my career where I've had to actually start saving emails and having other people in the room with me. Because this person was just constantly not telling me things and saying it was because it was . . . my judgment is she used those personal relationships too much by using her access to special accesses and stuff. (Liam)

Not all participants engaged in “Watching Words” or expressed a sense of threat. Rico was an outlier in his willingness to lean into the toxic environment to protect a junior analyst in his branch. However, the toxic personality was also located in another city:

> I even said this once, I said, "If your person calls and talks to my person this way again, I'm going to get in the car, drive six hours to [location redacted] and punch both of you in the head." That was the last time we received a berating phone call. (Rico)

For participants who watched their words, the process was a microcosm of a larger set of efforts directed toward avoiding mistakes. However, limiting interaction also limits collaboration. Thus, “Watching Words” raised the specter of having to choose between self-concepts and the mission. The next section and the closing section on consequences from the “Folding In” primary dimension will explore the way participants reconciled anti-collaborative processes and consequences to the IC.

***Process of Folding In—Not Affecting Me*:** Chapter 2 explored empirical research indicating that collaboration, collegiality, and healthy forms of coopetition further intelligence objectives. Success in shielding one from the impact of TWB so that performance never

suffered would be an understandable goal by intelligence officers. This performance was inseparable from the “self”:

> I think your good performers, part of the layer that goes in is their “self,” but I think also part of it is the protection, the good for the nation that people feel, and to me that makes a difference in the performance and how much people are willing to give during hard times. (Gwen)

Compromising performance was not merely a threat to national security. Doing so was a threat to what they knew themselves to be. Thus, through a process of “Not Affecting Me,” participants explored ways in which “Folding In” never affected their performance on the job:

> I never allowed it to impact my performance. (Christina)

> Productivity-wise, it doesn't really seem to affect things because people want to come in, they want to do what they do. It's just this thing that needn't be there. (Rico)

Whether claiming that “Folding In” never affected their performances were limited to the interviews, or whether these internal conversations became part of “Folding In” processes during toxic events were unclear because delineating past events from the retelling is problematic. However, some doubts about the impact of lost hours, distraction, and broken collaboration emerged:

> From a productivity perspective, I don't think it really affected me too much. Maybe that's a blind spot that I have, and maybe it did, but I didn't notice that it did. (Zeke)

The following section will explore the consequences of “Folding In.”

Consequences of Folding In. A principal tenet of grounded theory methodology is the transition that occurs as consequences in one set of events become conditions in the next. I argue that processes also may become conditions when those processes transform from systems of action into systems of belief. Participants sought to protect the mission by preserving their abilities to function in their workplaces. However, those same processes of shutting individuals out and self-censoring took a blunt-force instrument to collaboration that diminished the mission in ways that may have become normative over time. These new norms emerged

through decline in emotional commitment, mission focus, and faith in their IC entity as an institution that led one participant to proclaim:

> At some point, an epic failure is going to happen because of the toxicity. (Zeke)

The following section will explore the impact of “Folding In” through three main consequences: “Mission Dread,” “Get a Banana,” and “Losing Faith.”

***Consequence of Folding In—Mission Dread*.** “Mission Dread” reflects long-term emotional impacts from knowing that serving the mission meant working alongside the toxic personality. However, unlike the onset emotions within the core condition of “I Felt,” “Mission Dread” became an omnipresent cultural dynamic:

> And those days I was dreading going in, being exhausted throughout the day. (Dana)

However, impact was not contained in the office:

> There were days I just didn't even want to go into work. It just takes you longer to get dressed. Everything took longer because of the way that all felt. If you can't go to work and feel like you can go to work and do your job in a neutral environment, it will affect you. (Zeke)

Physical manifestations of “Mission Dread” brought the prospect of future behavior it into the present. Joel empathetically projected himself into the experiences of one of his operational teams:

> It's the fact that I'm looking at my schedule, I see that I have to work with this guy two days next week, and my stomach starts to hurt because I already know, going in ahead of time, just how terrible it's going to be. They would be thinking, "What's he going to say now? What's he going to do now? What kind of garbage is going to come falling out of his mouth that I have to listen to for 12 hours?" (Joel)

Participants argued that the magnitude of “Mission Dread” was not in the feeling but in the dynamic it created. “Mission Dread” as a consequence catalyzed a more quantifiable consequences of “Folding In” as productivity and mission focus declined.

***Consequence of Folding In—Get a Banana*.** Joel inspired the naming of this consequence, “Get a Banana,” when he examined how unaddressed TWB numbed work commitment among intelligence officers over time:

> People will do the bare minimum to get their job done because they know that, as long as they're doing the bare minimum, they can't get reprimanded. They won't go out to try to solve complicated problems or bigger issues or anything. They'll literally just sit there, push button, get a banana, go home. (Joel)

As referenced in other sections of this dissertation, intelligence officers do not have jobs. They have missions. Participants referenced the intelligence mission and their integration into its purpose as a core value of why they work in the IC—and a value they saw lost amid TWB:

> Part of it is the protection, the good for the nation that people feel, and to me that makes a difference in the performance and how much people are willing to give during hard times. I could have cared less if I was at work. (Gwen)

> There was definitely a lot of trying, and then there was probably a point at which there was less trying. (Natalie)

For Mike, a years-long battle to address overt racism by a supervisor who continues to enjoy support from his agency's leadership has been more than numbing. He is worn down:

> I'm at a point where I don't want to focus and say, "What is it that I'm doing? What is it that I can do better?" On that point, I'm tired. (Mike)

Reflecting back to the "Not Affecting Me" process, intelligence officers argued that they continued to perform. However, the IC lost their full commitment:

> If I was in an environment where I felt fully integrated, I think that I would have contributed more. (Kit)

> If an analyst was going to push hard for their point of view, unless I really heavily disagreed with it, I wasn't going to push as hard as you would expect from somebody in the same position. (Gwen)

Intelligence only makes an impact if it produced. Participants who were supervisors had the most pointed comments on how TWB affected production as the business of intelligence:

> Performance suffered. Those behaviors started to have the negative impact on productivity, which it did. (David)

> It was true in this case that the hostility and the low performance were perfectly correlated. The toxic behavior did have an effect on the bottom line. (Finn)

Links between reduced production and national security also surfaced:

> I don't know how it can't impact national security because that's the actual business. It'd be like me working for a private company, and I'm responsible for the financials and I could give a shit if it makes any money. (Gwen)

Consequence of Folding In—Lost Faith. “Losing Faith” is a final consequence in which TWB led them to question both leaders and the overall institutions within which they served. For participants, failing to confront toxic personalities and remove enabling structures emerged from a mixture of a lack of commitment, apathy, and benign incompetence. The targets of their lack of regard included senior leaders:

> This is someone that I have a lot of respect for. It made me wonder if I should hold that person in the esteem that I did. (Zeke)

Targets also included programs:

> It made me lose confidence in, not just the technical development program that I was in, but in all of the technical development programs because if decisions were made that put somebody like that in a program that manages new employees, what are we doing? (Celine)

Participants also noted a boomerang effect in which they believed others perceived them as incompetent-once-removed because of their inabilities to address the TWB on their own:

> All these supervisors now who work for me are coming to me and saying, "Hey, I got this going on in my department. I need your help to fix this or I need your help to do that." I couldn't help them. (David)

Intelligence officers have deep family relationships as they recruit children into the IC or are “legacy kids” in their own rights. Gwen was a career intelligence officer, as was her ex-husband. Thus, her son would be ripe for recruitment as a “legacy kid”:

> I would never recommend my son. If somebody asked me would I recommend they work for my agency . . . I don't think I would recommend it. (Gwen)

Others expressed decisions to depart the IC because they have accepted that they cannot reconcile failures to address TWB with their expectations of what their work environments should be:

> What you would think is [that] the cream would rise to the top. When you find that [is] not the case, it's disheartening. I’m looking for the exit door. (Lamar)

Summary. As a primary action dimension of *Holding Self*, “Folding In” departed from the stabilizing and maneuvering within “Seeking Subliminal” in favor of defensive actions focused on

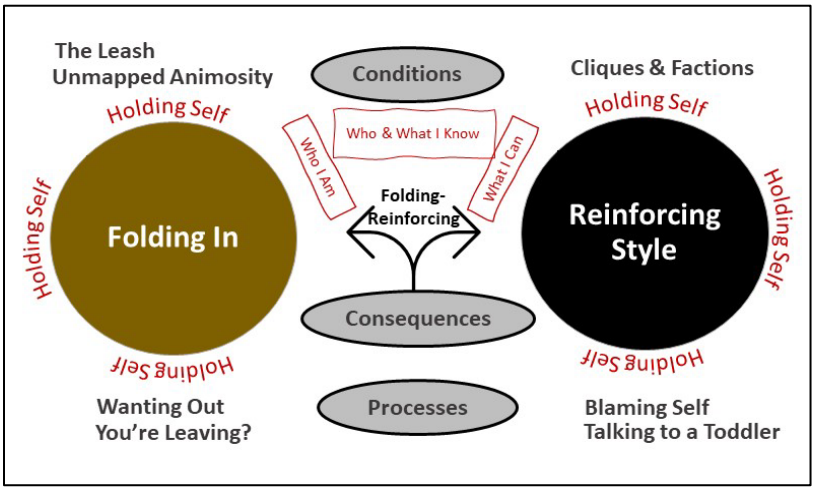
fear and withdrawal. Thus, while "Seeking Subliminal" moved the mission forward, "Folding In" diminished the mission through lost collaboration and commitment. The next dimension of *Holding Self* is the Inter-Dimension of "Folding-Reinforcing."

Inter-Dimension of Holding Self: Folding-Reinforcing

Illustrated in Figure 4.13, the inter-dimension of "Folding-Reinforcing" was a framework in which participants' composure in the workplace became significantly challenged. Like the "Seeking-Folding" inter-dimension, the framework was an interchange between primary dimensions—in this case, between "Folding In" and the final primary action dimension, "Reinforcing Style." Three conditions and four processes bracketed consequences in which the participant returned to "Folding In" or moved to "Reinforcing Style." The following section will review the interdimensional conditions and processes.

Figure 4.13

"Folding-Reinforcing" Inter-Dimension and Elements of Holding Self



Conditions of Folding-Reinforcing. Conditions for "Folding-Reinforcing" primarily occurred within perceptions of lost agency, and even interpersonal safety. TWB became more overt, and the context became more untenable. Like "Seeking-Folding" as an interim condition, the conditions would subsequently set up a process along other dimensions of *Holding Self* in which participants would pivot between moving onto the next dimension or return to an earlier state. The following section will discuss this dynamic within the conditions of "The Leash," "Unmapped Animosity," and "Cliques and Factions."

***Condition of Folding-Reinforcing—The Leash*.** As the name implies, “The Leash” was a condition in which participants felt controlled by others in the toxic environment. Distinctions between “Folding In” conditions and “Folding-Reinforcing” included a heightened awareness that “Folding In” processes had enabled others to place artificial boundaries on them:

> This is a guy that was not assertive at all, and he was confident that I was under his control for two years. (Natalie)

Like “Stone Walls” as a condition of “Folding In,” participants on “The Leash” existed in an environment in which they perceived that others sought to limit their agency. However, within “The Leash,” the loss of agency had become internalized beyond just something being done to the participant by the toxic personality. A transition from using pronouns such as “he” or “she” to the generalized use of “they” betrayed an awareness of “The Leash” as a systemic element of control within a maze that had no exit:

> They made it pretty difficult for me. I got selected for another job, and then they blocked me from taking the job. Then, I just had a tough time with them about it. When I came back from maternity leave, they had filled my job, so I didn't have a job, and kind of did the whole, "Well, we thought you were leaving and taken this other job." I was like, "You denied me going to that job!" (Dana)

Participants saw this systemic “leash” as a concerted effort to limit their success. In this context, TWB was no longer perceived as one in which toxic personalities sought to promote themselves at the expense of the participant. “The Leash” was about them:

> I was the most senior member on the team, but there was no way in the world that the leadership was going to allow me to fill in as the branch chief. No way. They actually put our branch under another branch and dual-headed another person rather than let me take any leadership function. (Margaret)

> I felt like they wanted me to die. I felt like they didn't accept me for who I am, and they just wanted me to disappear. (Kit)

With this transition from “he” and “she” to “they” the “self” was now inextricably linked from the goals of others in the environment. Mead’s (1934) interactive “self” now skewed toward that reflected appraisal of something to be controlled on a “leash” but extended into

relationships with teammates and stakeholders. A second condition of “Folding-Reinforcing” discusses “Unmapped Animosity” as this broader extension.

***Condition of Folding-Reinforcing—Unmapped Animosity*. “**Unmapped Animosity” emerged as a condition in which passive forms of TWB transitioned to overt yelling, slamming, and verbal assaults such that the team atmosphere began to change. Participant preambles related to toxic behaviors created inextricable links with the atmosphere surrounding them. Participants shifted between present and past tenses during these moments closing the distance between remembering and reliving:

> One of these junior men [and I] have a conversation about how much they like me or don't like me. There was just an unmapped animosity directed at me. I mean, just the gloves are off. (Margaret)

> Their emotions are high and now it's in everyone's face. In my first year here, there was an Intelligence Officer that was extremely aggressive in an office in front of everyone towards me. (Lamar)

Additionally, Margaret’s use of the phrase “at me” and Lamar’s reference to “in everyone’s face” indicated a sense of physical assault and an invasion of space. Others adopted the depersonalized “you” to reference what would happen if they pulled too firmly on the leash:

> He didn't like anybody who didn't see things his way, raised his voice, and you always knew he was going to talk bad about you if you weren't towing his line. (David)

Trying became futile:

> She was toxic. She had one person that was pretty much like her golden child and everyone knew it. It was defeating to know that no matter what you did, you were never going to be held on that standard. You were never going to be on that pedestal that that other person was. (Joel)

Animosity was a standard behavior that participants shared. However, not all participants who experienced “Unmapped Animosity” embraced the condition as a reflected appraisal:

> Effectively, one of the phrases that he used was, "I regret hiring you. You aren't good enough to be at this agency. I should never have hired you. I wish you would just leave." I don't care whether he thinks he's right or not. I don't have to take this. This is ridiculous. This is unacceptable. This is unprofessional. He's no longer at the agency. (Celine)

The use of the phrase, “He’s no longer at the agency,” implied triumph as if to say, “He’s gone. I’m still standing.” Thus, she never entered the “Folding-Reinforcing” inter-dimension because her self-concept stabilized so that she rejected his characterization of her as a barrier.

Condition of Folding-Reinforcing—Cliques and Factions. “Cliques and Factions” were integral conditions within “Folding-Reinforcing” as in-groups and out-groups replaced the collaborative structures built around trust:

> It's really individual parts, then, instead of working as one whole unit to try to accomplish the mission. It really affects . . . I think morale is a big one. Just the whole trust issue. (Joel)

In these framings, cliques and factions became less about distinctions between perspectives on how to arrive at the best solution. They were mechanisms to build power around personalities:

> One of the worst characters had his own clique. (Zeke)

For some participants, the cliques became micro-organizations themselves:

> Even in one or two cases, you'd say something in private to one of the clique leaders. They would admit there is a clique and tell you that you have an opportunity to join it. Well, it got creepy. (Loess)

Supervisors stood at the apex of cliques and factions but in complex ways. As managers, they held formal authority over organizations but also the leadership power to affect relationships. When they failed in the former, the latter typically contributed to toxic team environments:

> Whenever there were significant issues, events, or meetings, she would always call out [sick]. We would be sitting there left to represent the organization in her stead, and we would be unprepared. That led to a lot of infighting, uncertainty, and misdirection within her organization, within her office. (Jason)

Cliques and factions formed the reactive condition to what Ben referenced earlier in the study in relation to “co-signing,” in which members of a single ethnic group advocated for each other:

> So, there's not a lot of people who look like me. But there's only so much of each other's offices we're going to go to because people start talking. But what we did was go to lunch and just talk outside of work. (Ben)

Like interim conditions, “Folding-Reinforcing” functioned as an interchange between primary dimensions. Processes included reconciling self-concepts with changes in teams, their organizational fitness, and coming to terms with their roles in creating circumstances. The next section discusses processes within “Folding-Reinforcing.”

Processes of Folding-Reinforcing. Participants described four processes for the “Folding-Reinforcing” inter-dimension. “Wanting Out” was the process of considering departure from the IC. “You’re Leaving?” referenced their reflection on the camaraderie of seeing other intelligence officers leave. In all cases, participants perceived these departures to be related directly to the toxic atmosphere. In “Blaming Self,” participants took some measure of responsibility for their own circumstances, either by action or lack of action. Similar to “Not Affecting Me” as a process of “Folding In,” a fourth process of “Talking to a Toddler” was a process emerging in the interview itself; in this case, the participant placed themselves in an intellectually or morally superior position relative to the toxic personality.

Process of Folding-Reinforcing—Wanting Out. The “Folding-Reinforcing” inter-dimension was a place of reconsideration. Participants reconsidered career choices, the mission, and their fit within the IC. Some participants explored this dimension through the proverbial rear view of having already left the IC but still turning over events as their lives had changed course. Others had remained in the IC but left the toxic micro-environment. A third group continued to mull options even during the interview.

Nuanced differences emerged in “Wanting Out.” Some demanded an exit and their leadership’s support in doing so as they recognized that conditions within the toxic environment had challenged their self-concepts in dangerous ways:

> I just wanted another job. I wanted out of the environment. I went upstairs to the office chief and I told her, I said, “You've got to get me out of here.” I was honestly worried that I was going to do something to get myself fired if I didn't get out of there. (Dana)

As noted earlier, Dana was a “Legacy Kid.” The IC was an extension of her self-concept. However, there was always another job to be had. Leaving for another at the right time would

help to ensure she had one. For others, the IC mission had been a dream that became an unrealized fantasy:

> I had really dreamed all my life of that job, and I had a huge, crushing feeling of disappointment. Literally dreamed all my life. (Natalie)

Despite their different paths to the IC, both women recounted moments in which their senses of "self" seemed in conflict with remaining:

> I did start to question why I was there. Am I in the right job? Am I in the right organization? If this is what it's like, I don't want to be here. (Dana)

> What am I doing here? I came here for the mission. It was pretty much just one day. I was just like, "All right, we're done here." (Natalie)

Giving up on coveted career fields was the price to be paid for regaining that "self":

> I felt not supported, isolated. When I realized that, I just needed to let go of being a [redacted] analyst all together. I kind of just felt like I just needed to vote with my feet. (Kit)

"Wanting Out" was also a process in which participants compared—compared earlier careers and former offices for how they imagined things might have been different:

> In the . . . military, when an issue is identified as a detriment to the unit or the mission, it's addressed. Here, it almost feels like there's more of a need for the workforce to believe that leadership cares to look at an issue, but actually changing anything is not really important. (Lamar)

Process of Folding-Reinforcing—You're Leaving? "Wanting Out" was not the private purview of participants. "You're Leaving?" referenced reflections on the departures of valued colleagues:

> Then, if you were a decent person and you recognized this, they were done in about three months. (Eve)

"You're Leaving" was viewed as a rebellion against the "good old boys club" but also a point of rejection:

> There was a guy who was a mentor of mine. He was brilliant. But he was a younger guy with more progressive views about diversity and workplace organization and all these things. They were having none of it. "I see where this is going." He decided to leave. (Lamar)

Participants also received validation from others' departures. Consequently, "You're Leaving?" became reflected appraisals of their own "Wanting Out" fantasies as if to say, "If all of the good people are leaving, then I am good, too":

> Literally, within a four-week period, four of us gave our notice. (Natalie)

Even as "You're Leaving?" became a psychological safety "Folding-Reinforcing" also included self-blaming in which they took ownership of their part in arriving at the psychological space in time. The next section will review the process of "Blaming Self."

***Process of Folding-Reinforcing—Blaming Self*.** "Blaming Self" consisted of processes in which participants blamed themselves for some aspect of their experiences within the toxic environment. However, the foundation of that self-blame emerged in nuanced ways. Several blamed themselves for failing to investigate the cultural dynamics of the organization before taking the position:

> This was really going to broaden my portfolio, but I hadn't done the due diligence of trying to find other people that work there and get what their feel was for the culture. (Margaret)

"Blaming Self" processes also challenged self-concepts as intelligence people with the acumen to protect themselves and the agency to control their own circumstances:

> I always want to think that people are going to do better, or people are going to do more, or they're even just going to do their jobs. Every time it happens, I never think it's going to happen, but it always does. (Celine)

"Blaming Self" was a solitary process that left them isolated. "Friends" always seemed to be in the place that they left and never where they were:

> I felt like I have no allies, I had no friends there. I felt like I made a huge mistake in going there. (Kelly)

However, blame also shifted in passive ways to the toxic personality in the final process of "Folding-Reinforcing": "Talking to a Toddler."

***Process of Folding-Reinforcing—Talking to a Toddler*.** In the "Folding In" primary dimension, participants used a "Not Affecting Me" process during the interviews to claim that

their performance never suffered amid TWB, even as they described ways in which they engaged in practices that diminished production and overall contributions. The "Folding-Reinforcing" inter-dimension included a similar reconsideration process in which participants claimed the intellectually and morally superior high ground over toxic personalities. As the name implies, "Talking to a Toddler" included infantilizing toxic personalities:

> I mean, it was like talking with a toddler in some ways. (Margaret)
>
> [I would say], "So, think about that and you two figure it out, I'm not running an adult daycare here." (Rico)

It also included talking about toxic personalities as insignificant minions:

> We had a very senior officer who then brought some of his . . . I call them little birds. And, you know, just other little birds chirping in his ear. (David)

As well-meaning but inept:

> It just seemed like all he was focused on was being a glorified a team lead from when we were back at the [redacted]. Not functioning as a senior. So, I just felt like I was trying to explain my role and my existence. (Christina)

Or as simply inept without the well-meaning:

> The people that stayed are the people that are just incompetent because . . . that's all they know. (Eve)
>
> I was on a ship of fools. (Margaret)

Or, finally, as just a bunch of "rednecks":

> They want to make it seem like it's this high-tech agency with a lot of high-IQ people, but really, a lot of the people who work at the agency are just [location redacted] red-neckers. (Kit)

Inter-dimensions function as weigh stations between primary dimensions. Explorations of "Wanting Out," "You're Leaving," and "Blaming Self" processes were places where intelligence officers weighed options. As with the "Seeking-Folding" inter-dimension, consequences included the outcomes related to decision points as responses exacted on the environment that became conditions of the next set of experiences. These consequences will be discussed as the conditions for the final primary dimension, "Reinforcing Style."

Primary Dimension of Holding Self—Reinforcing Style

"Reinforcing Style" is a dimension in which the participant's responses to TWB remained on an unproductive path that led to deleterious consequences for the participant and disengagement from the mission. Notably, participants responded to TWB in ways that engaged the "Who I Am" psychological primary dimension at the expense of effective uses of "Who and What I Know" and "What I Can" psychological dimensions. David was the inspiration for the dimensional name:

> I just was going to keep trying to reinforce my style, using my style as a bulwark against it. (David)

As with the other two dimensions, multiple participants entered "Reinforcing Style" and remained for various periods. Unlike the "Seeking Subliminal" dimension in which participants engaged self-concepts, organizational acumen and agentic processes to maneuver around TWB, and "Folding in" in which they socially withdrew, participants in "Reinforcing Style" confronted obstacles transparently. Thus, participants in the "Reinforcing Style" dimension leaned into those environments in ways that centered the "self" within them. Those who remained within this dimension for extensive periods were either terminated, reposted, or otherwise experienced career disruptions in which they disengaged from the mission.

Because this dimension was arguably the least effective from which to manage one's responses to TWB, more explanation is warranted to understand why participants entered this path. Some participants never entered this dimension because they perceived that associated processes would diminish their performance:

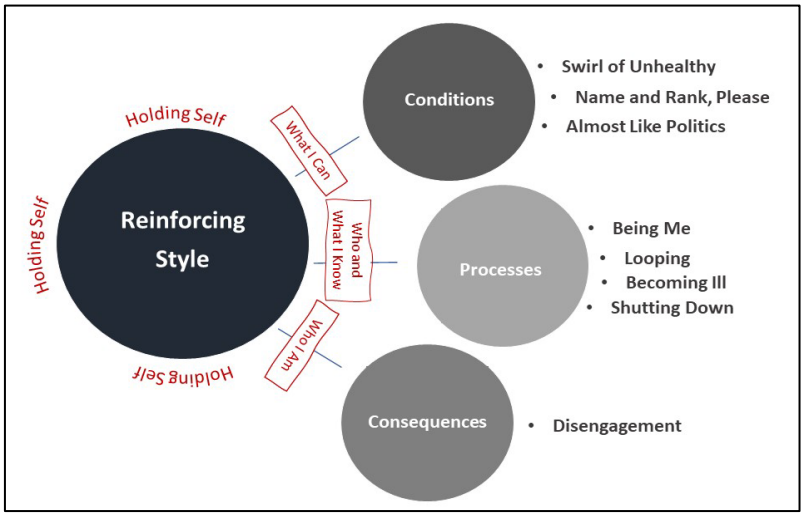
> I'd probably still done the same thing. I'd probably done it the same way. [However,] I look at it this way, the government has agreed to pay me to do certain things. I have certain amount of leave where I also get paid, but otherwise my responsibility is to get up and come in, do my thing, play well with others, go home and the next day. (Rico)

The destructive impact that the "Reinforcing Style" can best be understood through the words of someone who avoided entering it:

I just value the actual art of analysis. It was just like, "Well, I'm going to do this." For example, someone once said to me decades ago, "Well, why are you just burnishing your credentials, because you're producing a lot." There's a lot of things you do need to . . . show to customers. I'm not saying I'm above any ego or personal ambition, but wasn't it what you're supposed to do? (Loess)

Figure 4.14

"Reinforcing Style" Primary Dimension and Elements of Holding Self



The following sections explore "Reinforcing Style" as a framework for action as illustrated in Figure 4.14. I begin by exploring conditions instrumental for laying the dimensional groundwork. I follow with a discussion of processes within the dimension and the consequences of those processes.

Conditions of Reinforcing Style. Conditions within "Reinforcing Style" catalyzed escalating conflicts between the participants' operating environment and their abilities to hold "self" while contributing to the mission. Within these conditions, a confluence of relationships, military-civilian tensions, and political environments created a sense of alienation from their organizations. The following section will discuss the following conditions: "Swirl of Unhealthy," "Name and Rank, Please," and "Almost Like Politics."

Condition of Reinforcing Style—Swirl of Unhealthy. "Reinforcing Style" can be aptly described through Gwen's characterization:

It becomes a swirl of unhealthy. (Gwen)

The “swirl” that she described spiraled through all relationships. However, in the complex operational framework for the IC, relationships could be hybrid organizational forms, interorganizational, and support-customer relationships. In this dynamic, the swirl revealed itself in wedges formed between teammates and expectations of trust:

> I think it broke down trust at a lot of different levels because nobody knew who was telling what to whom. (David)

However, the “community” framework of the IC removed traditional boundaries on what constituted a “team” or a “group”:

> You have a circle of people—that's a team. One person of that team is the leader, and he's part of another circle. He's part of the circle of leaders. That starts now to come apart. (David)

The porous boundaries extended severed relationships in the micro-environment into broader relationships of stakeholders and colleagues:

> If I'm someone that has to work with you as a stakeholder, and I need to bring you in to do a task, I don't want to bring your toxicity into my environment because it could possibly corrupt what I'm doing over here too. It affects everything that you touch. (Zeke)

Severed relationships impacted more than team comity. Participants linked TWB to impacts to the mission through loss of trust in the analytic work but also fear to challenge:

> [If] people stop trusting each other, you don't trust judgments, right? If I'm looking at a product, and I say, "I see five tanks," and you're sitting next to me and you're part of the other clique and whatever your reasons are, [you say], "This guy's stupid. You're going to be less likely to say, "Look, Ma'am or Sir, I really don't think that's what you're seeing," because you were afraid of what is going to happen to you. (Zeke)

Participants described emotive responses to dysfunctional operational frameworks within the dimension:

> It just kept getting more and more explosive. (Eve)

> Say somebody reads an email, and it makes them mad, and they fire a response. Now, you got just this escalating rhetoric, (Finn)

Status imbalances between the toxic personality and the target exacerbated the emotive effect. Participants reported perceiving that they had less value to the team and backdoor communications as witnesses in the environment began to realign to remain on the right side of

power. Thus, the swirl not only gathered up power. The condition also reoriented standard operational norms:

> In a normal world or a normal organization, this would be one conversation. I, as a government employee would come forward and say, "I don't feel comfortable with the text messages that I've received from this contractor," and he would be gone. That's not how this organization was wired. It was like a bad training movie. (Margaret)

***Condition of Reinforcing Style—Name and Rank, Please*.** As noted in Chapter 2, the missions for the 18 IC entities span national-level intelligence, combat support, and hybrid combat support with national-level missions. Personnel range from civilian, military, and contractors, who must navigate ambiguous boundaries between the multiple organizations with which they associated. Culturally derived expectations for relationship management, authority and rank, and interactional norms can challenge relationships. Within in this dynamic, participants who were members of combat support and hybrid entities perceived that tensions between civilian and military personnel were significant contributors to TWB within “Reinforcing Style.” Perceptions that civilians were the “help” created referential ranking systems where civilian intelligence officers felt less valued and targeted by military personnel. However, Joel, a civilian supervisor and former U.S. Army combat veteran argued that the issues reflected a different military versus civilian attitude toward TWB:

> Especially being in that military environment, people are so willing to kind of just brush things off . . . to accomplish the mission, whereas people should be standing up and pushing back against that toxic leadership. (Joel)

Even civilian leaders within military IC entities reflected this cultural mindset, which surfaced as a form of “closing ranks” against those who challenged the power dynamic, including attempts at intimidation:

> He said, “Once this investigation kicks off, if you've done anything administratively that might expose you to risk, you won't be protected, and that risk might be up to and including removal from federal service.” (Margaret)

***Condition of Reinforcing Style—Almost Like Politics*.** As discussed in Chapter 2, participant politics does not play a positive role in intelligence analysis. In fact, intelligence

officers emphasize efforts to remove political influences from the intelligence environment. However, partisanship is only one permutation on the role of politics in organizations. Political gamesmanship as a resource distribution process (Leftwich, 2015), or more basically, as a means to choose winners and losers (Lasswell, 2018) challenged intelligence officers who did not understand the rules of the game.

The “Seeking Subliminal” dimension elevated the importance of acumen as a tool of leverage to sustain self-concepts and the mission. Alternatively, “Folding In” reflected a sense of victimization by toxic personalities with more political power. In “Reinforcing Style, politics emerged as condition in which participants contended with political environments that challenged self-concepts as “non-political.” These self-concepts translated into delayed realizations that organizational acumen mattered:

> I thought of myself as somebody who wasn’t into office politics, but I think the office politics were affecting me. (Kit)

Politics was an alien condition for participants who evaluated themselves, others—and themselves in comparison to others—through merit and accomplishment. Following espoused rules gave way to a lack of transparency. Some were left unaware, while others became resistant to playing the game. Additionally, the rules for gamesmanship differed according to organizational norms. Thereforce, as JDAs and other rotational opportunities brought outsiders into formerly cohesive organizations, participants who were less comfortable with politics felt cultural shifts for which they were not prepared:

> I experienced it almost as politics. It was not something I really was well prepared for. It's just not my nature. (David)

Confronting a new set of operational rules catalyzed a series of unproductive processes in which they rebelled by projecting values and contextually incongruent approaches onto the environment. Those processes are discussed in the next section.

Processes for Reinforcing Style. Intelligence officers in the study explored four processes for responding to TWB within the “Reinforcing Style” dimension. Each was a process

of pressing forward in toxic environment and against the conditions referenced in the previous section. As conflicts between processes emerged, participants departed from the maneuvering processes of “Seeking the Subliminal” to support self-concepts and rebelled against the withdrawal processes of “Folding In.” Rather, they followed behavioral chalk lines that elevated self-concepts but undervalued acumen and accurate perceptions of agency.

***Processes for Reinforcing Style—Being Me*.** Participants functioning within the “Reinforcing Style” dimension elevated commitments to treasured self-concepts. The more that TWB challenged their abilities to hold “self,” the tighter their grips became:

> I can only be who I can be. (Kit)
>
> I am who I am. (Mike)

For these intelligence officers, elevating the “self” into their operational environments overshadowed the maneuverability and acumen of “Seeking Subliminal” because, to do otherwise, would tarnish important aspects of authenticity. Within this framework, participants embraced that sense of “self” even as they reflected upon its limitations as intelligence environments shifted.

> I am who I am. I got comfortable in my skin many years ago, and frankly, it's served me well. My style and my approach has served me well up until GS-15. (David)
>
> It really bothered me because I guess I'm the type of person that what you see is what you get. (Christina 2020)

In this way, processes for *Holding Self* within the “Reinforcing Style” were parallel sources of pride and frustration. Within this dilemma, *Holding Self* processes remained static, even as intelligence officers recognized the challenges those self-concepts would pose to their ability to engage in them. Responding to TWB and the “self” were indivisible because their contributions to the mission were a function of a confluence between self-appraisals and reflected appraisals. As discussed in Chapter 3, clear distinctions between self-appraisals and reflected appraisals are difficult because they inform each other. However, unlike “Seeking Subliminal” where self-appraisals relied upon personal value statements regardless of what

others perceived, “Being Me” required that others saw the version of “self” that the participant valued:

> It wouldn't be a surprise to anybody who knew me. People knew me when I came over to the department, it wasn't like I was somebody they hadn't seen before. (David)
>
> It was stark. It was naked, it was on display. (Margaret)

This static reinforcement process in which the “self” was imposed on an unwelcoming environment catalyzed a second process in which participants became confined to behavioral loops.

Processes for Reinforcing Style—Looping. “Looping” described a series of sub-processes within “Reinforcing Style” in which participants became confined to repeated patterns of unproductive actions and thought patterns. “Looping” was a process designed to hold “self” even in circumstances in which they stood little chance of success. Participants revealed spiraling effects in which compromising, redirecting, and even quitting became synonymous with self-defeat. They perceived that moving any direction but forward was tantamount to victory for the toxic personality and their enablers:

> You either jump on the bandwagon or you just steer clear. Just shut up and do your thing. That was how I chose to react to the situation, and I didn't have any recourse. (Eve)

Organizational structures and Kusy and Holloway’s (2009) “power protectors” played significant roles within the political conditions of “Reinforcing Style.” While “Looping” kept participants on unproductive trajectories, senior leaders and redress organizations dispensed with opportunities to diffuse escalating dynamics. Rather, participants reported mobbing dynamics in which these elements coalesced around the toxic personality:

> He [her supervisor] leaned across the table and said, “You better be a 100% sure that you're ready to withstand what [will] happen in this investigation.” I leaned in and I said, "A 100%, open the investigation.” (Margaret)

However, “Looping” was not merely a framework for action. The process was a framework for one-way conversations in which participants assigned valuable time away from the mission to ruminate on conversations and interactions with the toxic personality:

> Yeah, it takes up space in my head. I think I could get more done. So, my mind gets caught up in, "How can I handle that better? How can I get this problem solved with this individual?" I could move on faster probably. (Kelly)

However, “Looping” was not always an internal process. When the toxic environment was directed at multiple members of a team, distraction became projected onto the environment so that collaboration became more about how to manage the toxic personality than the mission:

> We would talk about it constantly. [It’s a], distraction [from] doing the mission because you're busy talking about what you think is going on or what shouldn't be going on. (Joel)

Consequently, the process became one of sorting, shifting, and compartmentalizing the mission:

> You're bring parts of your agenda that aren't about building up the team. The stress that they feel should be the stress of work, not the stress at work, if that makes sense. (Zeke)

Processes for Reinforcing Style—Becoming Ill. Within “Becoming Ill,” participants reported declines in physical and mental health due to the toxic environment. I noted earlier that distinguishing conditions from processes was challenging because the latter could establish a framework for the former. “Becoming Ill” created one such analytical predicament because, while this state was a condition, it manifested itself as a response to TWB. Additionally, one could also argue that “Becoming Ill” is a consequence of the toxic environment. However, my research question is primarily concerned with how and why people respond to TWB in the ways they do; consequences of concern are those that emerge from their responses, not the consequences of the toxicity. I explore “Becoming Ill” as a set of processes.

Participants reflected upon periods in which they experienced the physical manifestations of toxic stress. For some participants, health impacts were more confined and acute, such as stress-related gastronomical or weight problems. In some cases, just the “knowing” that they would have to work with the toxic personality triggered the manifestation:

> When they see that they have to work with this certain individual, that they actually get physically ill. (Joel)

Some participants explored “Becoming Ill” within the context of ongoing experiences with toxic personalities. Within the primary dimension of “Reinforcing Style,” their inabilities to leverage the TWB, maneuver around it, and exit the team led them to manage their emotional states at the same time they were managing their work:

> It's taxing from a health perspective. Whether it's anxiety or, unfortunately even depression, those things lead to suicide. I've had issues with anxiety . . . of late because of the relationship that I've had with my leadership. (Mike)

> I don’t feel supported, and I feel like a sense of anxiety sometimes. Like social anxiety in different situations, that I just feel there's a pressure. (Kit)

As the behavior escalated, so did “Becoming Ill”:

> I ended up having a panic attack. I had thoughts of hurting myself, and I don't want to hurt myself. It's not me. A thought came into my mind, ‘Well if you killed yourself, maybe they'd have something to answer for’. (Margaret)

Subprocesses for responding to “Becoming Ill” differed among participants. Some sought counseling when they recognized the impact of the dynamic:

> I have to find something, whether it's going to counseling to address those. (Mike)

Some fell more deeply into the spiral through excess drinking and poor sleeping habits:

> I mean, that was the worst of the worst where I was physically sick. I would cry every night. I mean, every day I'd cry. I’d go home, and I drank because just waiting until the next day to pass my woes. I asked [the psychiatrist], I said, “Please, you gotta give me something so I can make it through the day where I don't, I don't react to these ridiculous situations.” (Eve)

The effects of “Becoming Ill” lingered after leaving the toxic environment:

> This is the most fit I've been in a while because I was so stressed. Some people don't take to workplace bullying or passive aggressive behaviors. (Christina)

“Becoming Ill” was a culmination of attempting to match self-concepts to incongruent work environments so that, ultimately, the participant’s poor health matched the poor work environment. The responses were not terminal. Rather, they were an interim set of processes to the final response within the dimension: “Shutting Down.”

***Processes for Reinforcing Style—Shutting Down*.** The "Folding In" primary dimension included "Shutting Down" processes in which intelligence officers became beholden to the toxic dynamic. "Shutting Down" differed from the withdrawal processes in "Folding In." In the former, participants erected barriers to protect themselves, which also diminished support to the mission. However, in "Shutting Down," participants rebelled against the mission itself:

> I just took it upon myself and said, "Oh, I'm not doing that anymore. I'm doing 100% this." I made the decision [that] I'm no longer going to do that type of work. I kind of shutdown. (Eve)

Some "Shutting Out" processes were ambiguous efforts to regain voice by compartmentalizing interaction with the toxic personality so that all sharing occurred in one direction:

> We really stopped having conversations about the organization, and more, it was me passing information to her about what was going on as I saw it. (David)

Participants were deliberatively selective on whom they "shut down." However, in a form of toxic flow, the process ultimately affected the broader work environment. They became singularly self-reliant and directed the distrust they had toward the toxic personality toward others, including those who might have been trying to help them:

> The messengers that were known for subversive behavior, the people that I trusted, I would take action on what they told me. So, yeah, it's not just important about your small group, but it affects everything that you touch. (Zeke)

Intelligence officers function within classified environments. Therefore, the opportunities that enable professionals in non-compartmented environments to work from home are less available to intelligence officers. For intelligence officers to work, they must be *at* work. "Shutting Down" interrupted this dynamic so that participants sought opportunities to be anywhere else:

> Hundreds of hours [of annual leave] less. Even after I moved on, I used hundreds more sick hours and took more annual leave in about a two-year timeframe than I had when I had a baby. Just didn't want to be there. (Gwen)

> If I knew that I had an appointment with something outside of the building, I would call and say, "Look, instead of coming in, I'm going to go straight to this, and then I'll be in afterwards." (Zeke)

Consequently, “Shutting Down” was a transition from “Shutting Out.” However, reflecting upon the process also transitioned them from the “Not Affecting Me” process of denying work impacts within “Folding In” to one in which they acknowledged their disengagement from the mission. The following section will explore disengaging consequences from “Reinforcing Style.”

Consequence of Reinforcing Style—Disengaging the Mission. As intelligence officers explored the consequences for “Reinforcing Style,” their insights categorized into one consequence: disengagement. Within “Seeking Subliminal,” disengagement was tactical and instrumental to sustaining the mission. Within “Folding In,” diminishing the mission became a form of “exiting in place.” In “Reinforcing Style”, “Disengagement” emerged differently among participants but never really on their own terms. *Holding Self* within “Reinforcing Style” counterintuitively disengaged them from the very self-concepts they sought to protect and separated them from the mission:

> Whether I realized it or not, I'm sure it did affect my performance on some level. (Zeke)

> To have me come in and sit on my ass and scroll to the end of the Internet every day for eight and a half hours and then go home is not the fair deal that I signed up for to deliver to national security. I wasn't worth the money that they were paying me, and I knew that. (Margaret)

As discussed in “Looping” as a process, “Reinforcing Style confined participants to a steady course that significantly limited the field of view they needed to respond effectively. Intended consequences often failed to align with actual results as they chose courses of action based on expectations for what the rules should have been rather than responding to the rules as they were. These disconnects often led to permanent disengagement when they were reposted or terminated:

> Here was a guy who I respected, who I went to, and I think it just didn't go the right way. He just basically said, "Well, you need to talk to your boss." It wasn't long after that that I was moved along. I only found out about it late, because, as I said, politics is not a natural state for me. (David)

For some, departing the team became voluntary but in true “Reinforcing Style” form:

> I put in my two-weeks' notice [but] not to my boss. He doesn't give me respect and notify me of things. So, I gave it to the personnel section and that was it. I walked out with every single ID. (Eve)

As noted earlier, the longitudinal nature of response encumbers the interview as participants continue to reconsider past actions and decisions. For those who were contending with toxic events at the time of data collection, the interview became woven into ongoing decision processes for what to do. These decision process became merged with consequences as they reflected on the conflicts inherent in not wanting to leave but knowing they could not remain:

> They wanted to offer me a different position. Why is it that I have to give up something that I've worked for my career on to get to a point and be established and to be beneficial for not only the agency but myself? (Mike)

At its termination point, the desired consequence was to hold on to self-concepts, which demanded authenticity within all directions. Holding on to that authentic "self" enabled a sense of peace even while disengaging:

> Nothing would have changed for me. I don't know that knowing it would have changed much, except I might've gone looking for a different job. (David)

Summary. "Reinforcing Style" emerged as the most unproductive dimension for responding to TWB, as evidenced by the outcomes of those who spent significant time operating within its boundaries. Responses spiraled onto paths in which careers were significantly disrupted or prematurely ended. This consequence followed a logical trajectory. "Seeking Subliminal" was an ideal state because participants balanced organizational acumen, agency, self-awareness, and interpersonal agility to thrive rather than survive. In some cases, thriving meant using the TWB to the participant's advantage. As its polar opposite, "Reinforcing Style" formed an alternate reality of rigidity and unwavering determination to follow practices that yielded no benefit, often to the detriment of the participant's professional life and, sometimes, health. "Folding In" became a professional purgatory in which efforts to shield themselves from the impact of TWB also shielded them from the positive aspects of their work.

As participants explored their experiences and perspectives on TWB, the impacts to the mission from the three dimensions emerged early. “Seeking Subliminal” sustained the mission by incentivizing creativity in how to maneuver and leverage to push requirements forward. However, the ever-present focus on strategies and tactics within “Seeking Subliminal” were too cunning or too exhausting for some participants, who chose the “Folding In” dimension for much of their interview. The constant attention to remaining out of the toxic personality’s line of sight within “Folding In” also exhausted participants and diminished their focus on the mission. “Reinforcing Style” disengaged the mission because the singular focus on efforts to reel in the toxic personality and their enablers to complement the style of the participant left little energy or time to focus on the mission and had a Newtonian reaction on others who were determined to resist. Therefore, where one consequence of “Seeking Subliminal” was “The Mission Wins,” “Reinforcing Style” was a dimension in which nothing won.

Conclusion

This chapter’s focus on how and why intelligence officers respond to TWB differently focused the investigatory lens on personal meaning. The findings framed the cognitive work of sizing up the “self”, which shaped an image for participants around who they were relative to the toxic personality and others in the environment. “Who” they were emerged concurrently with assessments of agency and acumen to manage the toxic events. The alignment between this image and existing self-concepts became a tableau from which they established strategies for response. Strategies and choices shifted longitudinally as the cognitive work within the psychological dimensions reshaped elements of that tableau, necessitating other choices. The inter-dimensions became pathways for agility between the primary dimensions.

The core condition of *Holding Self* and the underlying core conditions of a passively hostile environment, unproductive emotions, and a sense of being alienated from their own work environment were consistently “there.” However, the tableau from which they operated to sustain those self-concepts reference another critical element in why intelligence officers

responded in different ways: context. In this way, the theoretical model in development would be incomplete without a parallel exploration of the situational or broader ecological influences constitutive of the phenomenon. The next chapter will recenter the lens on this broader framework to understand the role of social, relational, and positional factors on the research question.

CHAPTER 5: RESEARCH FINDINGS FOR SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS SEGMENT

Grounded theory research identifies conditions as elements that catalyze a phenomenon. In this form, conditions identify pathways for causality or, at least, incentives for action (Dey, 2007). Strauss and Corbin (1990, 1998) established two forms of "conditional matrixes" to identify the contextual elements impacting individual meaning. Similarly, Clarke (Clarke, 2005; Clarke et al., 2017) developed a situational matrix within situational analysis to identify the broader ecological factors relevant to the phenomenon. As discussed in Chapter 3, research studies combining the two methodologies are common. However, using them as multi-methods requires being able to delineate between the situational and conditional elements they are individually designed to identify.

This chapter conceptualizes the situation constitutive of, within, and surrounding how intelligence officers respond to TWB. These concepts will be conveyed in a series of situational social arenas that broaden the lens from mere individual meaning toward the broader forces as play. As already discussed, TWB emerges when power is used in destructive ways. While the IC is a complex macro-environment, U.S. citizenship and other requirements associated with gaining employment in an intelligence entity indicate that most employees were raised in an American culture in which power stratifications are less assumed ("Hofstede Insights—Country Comparison," 2019). Conversely, the breadth and complexity of the 18 entities made understanding the IC situation relevant to TWB response a challenge. Therefore, I make no effort to explore the IC situation in its entirety. Instead, I have limited the discussion to elements of the IC situation that influence and/or are influenced by intelligence officer response to the behavior. Some methodological processes within situational analysis methodology dominate the discussion, while others will not be major areas for exploration.

Situational analysis draws upon social worlds/arenas theory to understand how universes of discourse intersect, divide, and negotiate (Clarke, 2005). The next section will evaluate the IC "situation" relevant to the research question by identifying the elements in the

broader context constitutive of, in, and surrounding response to TWB in the IC. I begin by identifying the factors related to response in the form of two maps. An “unordered” situational map provides a display of each element that is relevant to the phenomenon. An “ordered” situational map structures this raw data into human, nonhuman, discursive, unarticulated, temporal, and spatial categories to inform the following discussion on social worlds/arenas. The IC’s size, sensitivity to external events, and the contradictions between identifiable structures in parallel with ambiguous networking subsystems qualifies it as a complex system (Cilliers, 1999, 2001). Every element is related to every other as a component of that system.

As discussed in Chapter 3, Foucauldian theories of power inform situational analysis because identifying discourses indicate the locus of power. Foucault’s (1980) “discursive fields,” as the material demonstrations of accepted social “truths” in the form of images, symbols, and texts, are the primary methodological tools in my analysis. In conducting the analysis for this study, specific social worlds and arenas emerged. However, so did forms of messaging uniquely coherent to specific social worlds in relation to each other. This reflection aligned with theory by Phillips and colleagues (2004) arguing that institutions are socially constructed through language. To understand this dynamic, I needed a conceptual framework to enable me to analyze the discursive fields within social worlds, how they aligned, and the inherent language and messages within them. King (2007) paraphrased the concept of discursive fields as collections of discourses around ideas of movement and conceptualized discursive repertoires as the messages that define them. I use King’s framework to explore and map three social worlds in the IC, their discursive fields, repertoires as critical themes, and other critical elements. I add an additional category—sites of dissent—representing decisions by social world actors to reject dominant discourses.

Situational analysis depersonalizes the research question in favor of understanding a collective and social context in a constant state of flux (Perez & Cannella, 2011). However, the focus on the individual intelligence officer cannot be entirely discarded, nor should be for this

study to be useful in practice. To maintain this link between the situation, the phenomenon, and those affected by them, I present insights from the grounded theory segment in these discussions when relevant. By including revelatory insights from the grounded theory portion, I hoped to blunt tendencies to begin seeing TWB as some abstract phenomenon in the situation without meaningful consequence to the very global environment under study. Additionally, availability of data places boundaries on research. The classified nature of the IC suggests that meaningful data that might have informed the situational analysis was not be available. This likelihood enhances the value of insights from those individuals experiencing and constructing the situation.

Mapping the Social Environment for Response to TWB in the IC

In Chapter 3, I discussed the major mapping processes that researchers use in situational analysis to understand the social environment around a phenomenon. Similar to the fracturing processes in grounded theory, situational analysis instills rigor by fracturing the discreet elements of the situation before reordering and conceptualizing them in a visualization of interactions, negotiations, and boundaries between them (Clarke et al., 2015). This section begins this mapping process by designing unordered and ordered situational maps.

Unordered Situational Map

Unordered maps represent all elements that are analytically relevant to the phenomenon under study. As the name implies, these initial maps are unordered lists of each articulated element; unarticulated elements that are relevant by their absences are also captured in unordered maps. Unordered maps provide rigor because elements are visually equal in the presentation. This lack of order enables researchers to make no initial assumptions about the relative importance or relationships of elements to each other that might contribute to premature disclosure. Researchers typically will produce multiple iterations of unordered maps as data collection and analysis continue (Clarke et al., 2015, 2017). While the production of unordered maps remains common across studies, the research question drives the data collection and

analytical focus. Different studies produce unordered maps with elements with varying degrees of scope (Khaw, 2012; Newberry, 2011).

I produced unordered maps in three stages prior to the final map constructed at Figure 5.1. I constructed an initial map at the start of the grounded theory segment to ground assumptions that I held. This process was similar to the statement of sensitizing concepts identified in Chapter 1 at the beginning of the grounded theory portion. Using an Excel spreadsheet that I updated throughout the study, I produced a second map at the conclusion of the grounded theory portion to capture the situational elements that participants identified as relevant to their responses to TWB. The initial map included 56 elements; the second post-grounded theory map had grown to an unwieldy 230 elements. At the conclusion of the situational analysis segment, I reduced the elements in Figure 5.1 by combining some elements that were thematically synonymous and eliminating others that did not emerge as significant in the broader situation.

Figure 5.1

"Unordered" Situational Map of Response to TWB Among Intelligence Officers

Ordered Situational Map

Ordered situational maps initiate conceptualization by organizing the elements identified in the unordered map within human, nonhuman, symbolic, discursive, sociocultural, and spatial categories (Clarke et al., 2015). They are particularly useful for identifying the second- and third-order elements that may not directly relate to responses to TWB in the intelligence space but influence them from a distance. In this way, the process surfaces elemental relationships, relational fissures, complexities, implicated "others" in the dynamic, and impacted "other" systems (Newberry, 2011).

Ordered maps also add value in their ability to reveal analytical gaps in the form of nuanced, unarticulated, and silences absent from the discourse. In this study, these "sites of silence" (Clarke, 2003, p. 561) stimulated questions in relation to what elements identified by research as critical factors in how individuals responded to TWB in other contexts did not emerge in the intelligence situation? Who are the implicated actors—others in the situation who are not directly related to the toxic events but who might have influence over or be influenced by the responses (Clarke, 1991; Strauss, 1978)? What knowledges are relevant to how intelligence officers choose to respond? Who controls the creation of and access to that knowledge (Clarke & Montini, 1993; Haraway, 1988)? Control of knowledge forms a convenient mask for inconvenient power (Foucault, 1990). Where does power reside in the situation? How do relational significance and power intersect? How does the inherent power of hierarchy compare to the ambiguities of relationally fleeting influence in the IC? How might power relate to the stability and instability of responses over time?

The ordered situational map in Table 5.1 began the analytical process around these questions by establishing relationships between elements identified in the unordered map. The focus at this point in the analysis was structuring the data within these categories. I noted emerging cross-relationships between categories but did not reference them in the ordered map

to maintain integrity within this segment of the analytical process. However, categorizing the various elements shifted the lens further away from the individual and into the conceptual.

Table 5.1

"Ordered" Situational Map of Responses to Toxic Workplace Behavior among Intelligence Officers

INDIVIDUAL HUMAN ELEMENTS/ACTORS	COLLECTIVE HUMAN ELEMENTS/ACTANTS	POLITICAL/LEGAL/ECONOMIC
Female Leaders	Team	Title VII
Senior Analysts	Leadership Class	Title 5
Team Leads	Branch	ICD 110
Mentors	Division	45-Days
Middle Managers	Network building	Accountability measures
Supervisors	Network tailing	HR
Civilians	EEO	Merit System
Contractors	HR	DCIPS
Military	IG	Appeal
Cronies	Ombudsman	Litigation
Raters	Legal Counsel	Evidence
Personalities	ERG	U.S. Congress
Leads		White House
Teammates		
DISCURSIVE CONSTRUCTIONS/INDIVIDUAL OR COLLECTIVE	**NON-HUMAN ELEMENTS/ACTANTS**	**TEMPORAL**
Women talk too much	Clearance accesses	Political polarization
Expertise is valued	Joint Duty Assignments	Tension between WH and IC
Toxic personalities aren't held accountable	The Stakes	Mueller investigation
Hall file	Leadership Tiers	COVID-19 Pandemic
Black men are aggressive	Psych evals	Black Lives Matter protests
Not enough female leaders	Formal complaints	MeToo Movement
Gendered infantilization (Girl, apologize!)	Email	
Friend-ubordinate	Rank	**IMPLICATED/SILENT ACTORS**
Friend-alleague	Work role	Families
Bro' culture	Crises	Caucasian males
		Policymakers
Gaslighting	**DISCURSIVE CONSTRUCTION/NON-HUMAN**	Foreign Partners
No secrets	360 surveys	
Leadership club	Climate survey results are ignored	Industry Partners
Minority co-signing	Negative climate survey results released too slowly	**SOCIO-CULTURAL/SYMBOLS**
Backdoor communications	Career risk	Patriotism
Too many middle managers	Failures are public, successes are secret	Idealism
Burden on the employee	Media highlight failure	Gender
You're branded!		Ethnicity
Compliance is not your friend.	**SPACIAL ELEMENTS**	Diversity
He works for me now	Headquarters	Agency Mission
I work for her now	Forward deployed	IC Mission
Core Mission	Remote supervision/management	

I had created an ordered map based on the initial unordered map I compiled at the outset of the grounded theory segment. That early iteration did not reflect the depth of the political/legal/economic elements represented in the final map below because I had not anticipated the impact of those compliance frameworks as they would emerge the situational analysis. Similarly, I had underrepresented the human elements within these frameworks and the important role they would play. These critical roles would ultimately emerge around actions they took in toxic circumstances, and equally important, actions they did not.

Researchers analyze extant sources to understand the situation. Like the unordered map process, I produced multiple ordered maps as additional sources to provide more robust data. I had created an ordered map based on the initial unordered map I compiled at the outset of the grounded theory segment. That early iteration did not reflect the depth of the political/legal/economic elements represented in the final map below because I had not anticipated the impact of those compliance frameworks as they would emerge the situational analysis. Similarly, I had underrepresented the human elements within these frameworks and the important role they would play. These critical roles would ultimately emerge around actions they took in toxic circumstances, and equally important, actions they did not. The individual human elements/actors category remained consistent in the various iterations.

I briefly considered not factoring in temporal elements in the maps for two reasons. First, they did not emerge in the extant sourcing relative to the data I collected during the situational analysis segment. Second, they only emerged in the grounded theory segment in abstract terms (such as fleeting comments by Gwen in relation to the “political climate” and Jason’s reflections that IC entities reflect the larger society). However, Clarke (2005) references “sites of silence” to reflect elements that may be tangentially influential to the situation, although they are silent in the data. Therefore, I referenced those temporal elements most salient during the time of the data collection and analysis as potential silent elements.

This expanded collection and map production had two purposes. One purpose was to view the intelligence situation from different perspectives to add depth to the analysis. Various elements had subtle, but important, nuances. For example, the concept of *accountability* surfaced both as a value in the discourse but also as *accountability measures* in structured systems of redress. A second example would be *expertise,* which might be categorized into the "Nonhuman Elements/Actants" frame or the "Discursive Construction/Nonhuman" frame. These nuances informed their locations on the ordered map. A second purpose was to address a fundamental data point in situational analysis related to identifying unarticulated elements in the situation, as well as implicated and silenced actors (other individuals) and actants (structures, systems, technologies, and other nonhuman factors affected by the situation; Clarke et al., 2017).

While Foucault (1972) argued that one cannot infer meaning from the situation, one is not necessarily excused from attempting to understand the situation's influence when the phenomenon under study is firmly rooted in a social process around meaning. While structures, processes, and symbols framed the situation constitutive of TWB, discourses reflected different linguistic forms by collectives constructing them although they shared the situation with other collectives. These "linguistic" variations in the discourse manifested in similar variations in messaging about what mattered in relation to response to TWB in the situation. The next section explores social worlds and arenas in the form of discursive fields in the IC using extant resources and confirming data from the grounded theory portion of the study.

Social Worlds in the IC

In its most simplistic form, Foucault (1980) conceived discourse as the truth that power creates by controlling knowledge. To understand the origin and positioning of discourse is to understand who holds power in a social environment. Discourse is an abstraction that reveals itself in "discursive fields" consisting of collections of symbols, structured texts, statements, processes, and rules that represent universes of discourse (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992;

Foucault, 1972; Parker, 1992). Discourses are slow to change (King, 2007). However, they are not necessarily still. Actors within the social environment may compete and conflict through arenas. Conflict takes on nonhuman traits in the form of incongruent discourses and actants that blunt each other's impact (nonhuman elements critical to the social arena; Clarke, 2005). The relevant discourses in a phenomenon combine to create social worlds that can be mapped and bounded (Clarke, 1991; Strauss, 1978).

The following sections map the social environment relevant to response to TWB among intelligence officers by identifying major social worlds, discourses, and structures in the situation. As conveyed in Figure 5.2, I explore primary social worlds through fields and repertoires. Responses to TWB are fundamentally social phenomena. Within this framework, "discursive repertoires", as messages that may enable or hinder movement within a social world (King, 2007), will figure heavily in the analysis. King conceptualized discursive repertoires to track change in social movements. I argue that the complexity in which the U.S. IC macro-environment responds to internal and external influences makes the construct relevant here. Additionally, framing social worlds through an analysis of discursive fields is consistent with the intent of situational analysis to understand elements constitutive of a phenomenon because the fields align with specific social collectives vying for power over the messaging.

Figure 5.2

Conceptual Framework

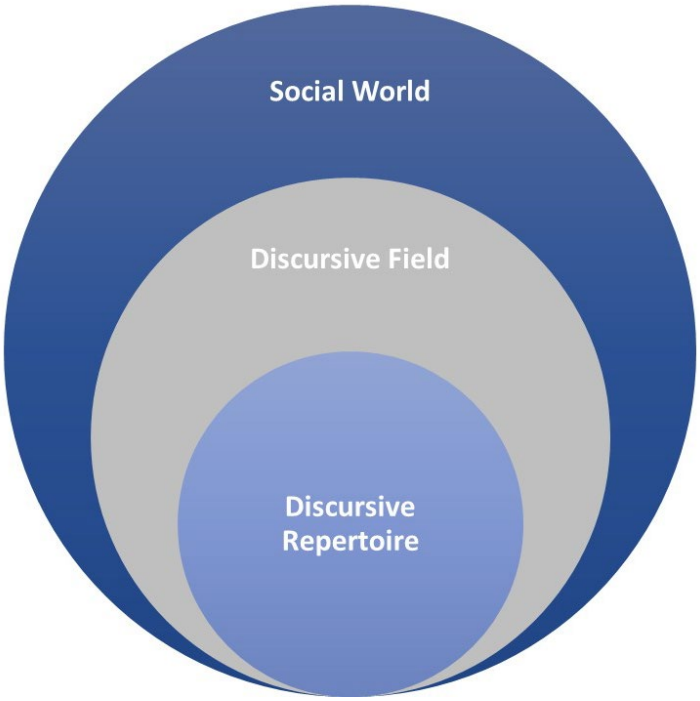


Figure 5.3

Social Worlds of Response to TWB in the IC

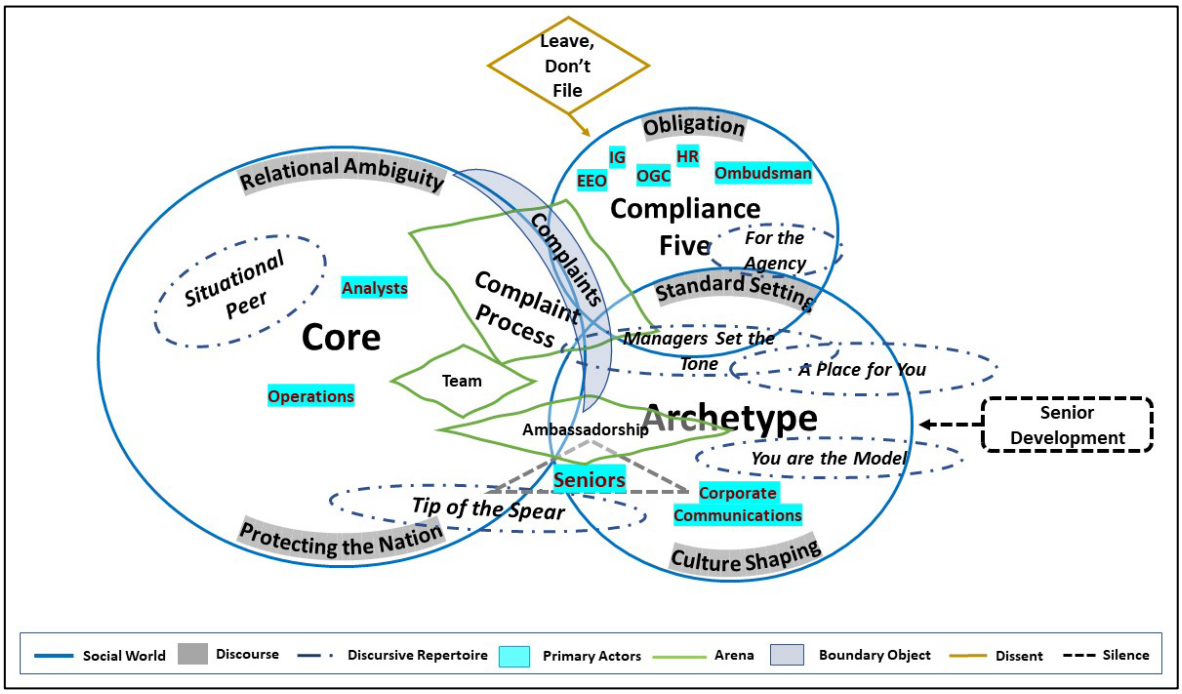


Figure 5.3 illustrates the complex social environment in relation to the research question. Three primary social worlds relate to responses to TWB among U.S. intelligence officers: the Core relating to the core mission; the Archetype relating to culture shaping and standard setting; and the Compliance Five framing around legal and regulatory frameworks defining redress. Each of the social worlds are sized in Figure 5.3 to reflect their relative size weightings in the social environment. As illustrated in the image, the Core would be the largest social world, followed by corporate elements in the Archetype, and Compliance Five as the smallest. While the graphic represents the macro-environment, these relative weights would correspond to individual entities as well.

The naming convention for Compliance Five has unique parameters in comparison to the other two social worlds. Each social world has standards for legitimization (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) in the form of certifications, training, and expertise. However,

micro-organizations, teams, and other collaborative structures within the Core and Archetype are fluid in response to global requirements. Conversely, the Compliance Five has a unique level of rigidity in five micro-organizations that do not shift with global requirements: the Office of the Inspector General (IG), Human Resources/Human Development (HR), the Equal Employment Office (EEO), the Office of General Counsel (OLC), and the Ombudsman. Each organization is required either by federal statute or a mixture of entity or U.S. government policies. Therefore, while an assumption behind situational analysis is that structure and discourse align with each other as symbols for power (Clarke, 2003, 2005), this reflection is particularly transparent in Compliance Five because rigid, externally driven mandates legitimize boundaries.

Other elements noted on the graphic are also key. Each social world has primary actors associated with it and use discursive repertoires as messages about its goals and values. Teams, the complaints process, and the "ambassadorship" of pop culture and former IC members form arenas of negotiation. Complaints function as a boundary object, or junction, between them, although the process may contain separate meanings for each. The Archetype contains a site of silence as a gap in the discourse related to senior leadership development (Clarke, 1991, 2005; Star & Griesemer, 1989). Compliance Five has a *site of dissent*, a term I have conceptualized as a form of rebellion by actors against the discourse within their social world. Actors typically follow the repertoires of their respective social worlds. However, as will be discussed in subsequent sections, impediments within Compliance Five influenced efforts by actors within that social world to adopt the repertoires of the Archetype to mitigate these challenges. I discuss each of these and other elements in the following discussion. I will also identify a taxonomy for each social world.

An understanding of how the situation intersects with the "self" is critical to understand the importance of the remainder of this chapter to the research question. Just as individuals have a reflexive "self" that immerses who they are with who they perceive others to think they

are, the "self" becomes reflexive of the situation. In fact, in her narrative research, Archer (2003) found that these reflexive conversations were forms of sensemaking to create images of ourselves in the social situation. These reflexive conversations calibrate our awareness of constraints on our power (Snow, 2001), which also function as enabling queues for what we can do (Cilliers, 2001). In turn, this sensemaking of the "self" in the situation shapes our perceptions of agency so important to *Holding Self.* Consequently, understanding the social situation is to understand the ecological conditions constitutive of responses to TWB.

Table 5.2

Core Social World Taxonomy

The Core Social World

Social World	Primary Actors	Discursive Field	Discursive Repertoire	Arenas	Implicated Actors
Core	Analysts	Protecting the Nation	Tip of the Spear	Ambassadorship	Organization, Leadership, & Agency
	Operations	Relational Ambiguity	Situational Peer	Team	Families
	Supervisors				

The Core Social World (Core) contains a discursive field, actors, repertoires, and arenas constitutive of the core mission. I have developed a taxonomy for the Core at Table 5.2 to give structure to the discussion. The primary actors within the social world are the analysts and operations personnel who are the focus on my study, as well as their front-line supervisors. The discussion begins with an explanation of relevant social worlds through its discursive field. While each component is critical to understand, some are better understood as complementary rather than divided into their own sections and will be explored in tandem.

Situational analysis decenters the focus away from the individual toward understanding how they are represented in their social, institutional, political, historical, and material positions (Aldrich & Laliberte Rudman, 2016). The fundamental purpose of analyzing discourses is to understand who and what holds power in the social world (Foucault, 1972). However, the

accessibility of data naturally affects the analytic field of view. The challenge for analyzing discourse within the Core has been that most texts, documentation, and even utterances, remain classified under Title 18 of the U.S. Code (Title 18 U.S. Code, 1948). One might conclude that the analysis in this section will be made partial because the conclusions rely upon unclassified sources even though the TWB addressed by the research question occurred in the classified domain. However, researchers rarely have access to every bit of data. They assess phenomena based on what they have available. Additionally, my constructivist leanings force me to value the interpretive nature of truth and power by those actors that produce the discourse. Therefore, narratives from actors represented in the grounded theory portion will provide valuable insights into where power lies. I begin the discussion with a brief exploration of primary actors in the Core.

Primary Actors. As discussed in Chapter 2, a full discussion what is meant by "analyst" extends beyond the scope of this study because how they represent the occupation relies upon their entity's mission, "INT," and skill requirements. For example, an intelligence operations specialist at DHS analyzes digital devices to support intelligence and law enforcement. Alternatively, an analytic methodologist at the same agency trains other analysts in methodologies and tradecraft. An "all source analyst" partner at ODNI focuses on regional or functional geopolitical threats (*Career Fields | Intelligence Analysis*, 2021). However, the unifying element for all analysts within the IC is a shared role to manage raw intelligence and/or mentor others in how to do so; analyze the data for meaning, significance, and gaps; and produce finished intelligence to provide strategic warning as a decision space for policymakers (Fingar, 2011a). In this way, they are positioned at the center of the core mission.

I chose the generalized term *operations personnel* to define a broad array of intelligence officers who provide critical graphical, administrative, scientific, collection, and production services to support the core mission. As with the analytic occupation, the breadth of operations personnel and their functions across the 18 IC entities goes beyond the scope of this study.

What is significant to this discussion is the way they become implicated within the core mission, which depends on entity mission and the needs of the analysts they support. A collections requirements officer at DIA researches and reviews all-source collection and exploitation requirements across multiple INTs (*Career Fields | DIA*, 2021). Their source strategies counterpart at NGA assigns GEOINT tasking requirements, as well as reviews the performance of prior strategies. Conversely, a technical counterintelligence officer at NGA supports the core mission through surveillance operations to prevent unauthorized penetration of the agency's infrastructure (*NGA | Geospatial Intelligence (GEOINT)*, 2021). The next sections discuss two levels of discourse within the Core—Protecting the Nation and Relational Ambiguity—and their repertoires.

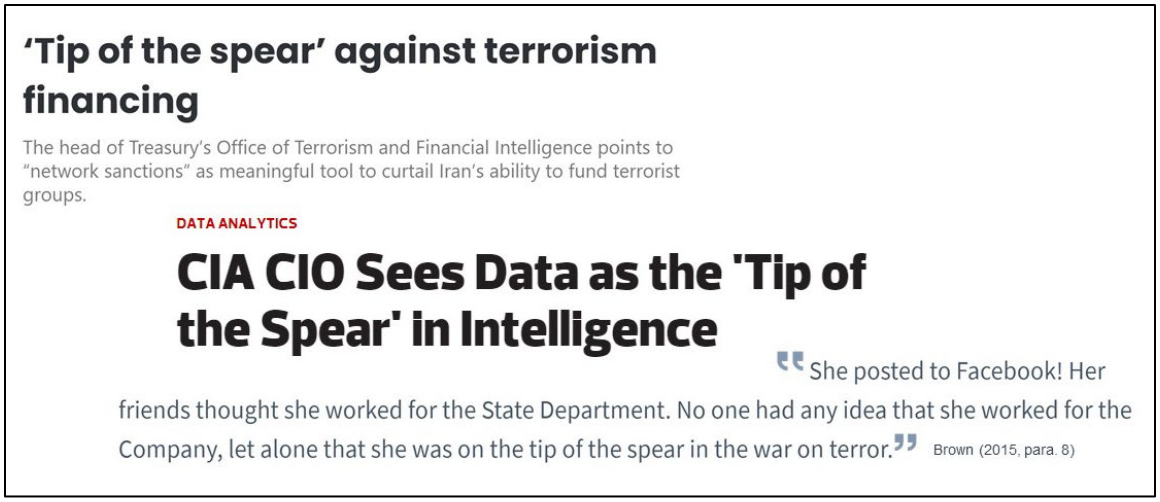
Protecting the Nation as Discourse. The Core is bound by structures, processes, and actors associated with the IC's core mission to produce timely, accurate intelligence for stakeholders as a warning against foreign and domestic threats (Davis, 2003). The field spans collecting (often in challenging conditions), then analyzing intelligence by actors in the situation. These actors then transmit that intelligence through briefings, discussions, and technologies. The social world spans office towers and war zones but with a common goal of level of discourse: Protecting the Nation. The following section discusses Protecting the Nation through its repertoire of "tip of the spear" and "ambassadorship" as an arena.

Tip of the Spear as Repertoire. Repertoires are forms of messaging designed to achieve goals. However, the discursive fields within which those repertoires function may foster or limit their effectiveness (King, 2007). Protecting the Nation contains a single repertoire of "tip of the spear" as a linguistic tagline for the IC's positionality at the forefront of danger, innovation, and national security. The repertoire gives symbolic and (emotive) energy to what is fundamentally a federal bureaucracy bound by structure, rules, and processes. However, the reflective nature of "self" and social context cannot be delineated as two separate processes

because webs of relationships (Snow, 2001) that collectively protect the nation reflect the messaging back onto each other and into other social worlds.

Figure 5.4

"Tip of the Spear" as Repertoire



As illustrated in Figure 5.4, the "tip of the spear" has become a discursive representation to describe the Core's operational environment from "big data" to tracking terrorist financing (Brown, 2015, para. 8; Gillis, 2019; Goldstein, 2018). The American Bar Association has declared that intelligence is residing at the "tip of the spear" in protecting U.S. national interests (Borene, 2010, p. 498). Pop culture is also an arena of romantic "ambassadorship" for "tip of the spear." In the final season of the iconic spy series, *Homeland,* a naïve U.S. Senator Paley achieves self-awareness as he realizes he has been the "useful idiot"[7] in an elaborate hoax by the Russians to destabilize American democracy: "Unless the White House has concocted a truly epic web of lies, which is, of course, always a possibility, I am the *tip of the spear* of one of the most insidious attacks ever perpetrated on the institution of American democracy" (*Homeland*, 2018).

[7] The term *useful idiot* is contemporary slang for what is more formally known as an *unwitting agent* of a foreign power.

As an underpinning of social worlds/arenas theory, arenas are sites of negotiation, tension, and action between collectives within social worlds (Clarke, 1991; Strauss, 1978). “Ambassadorship” formed an arena in which symbols and images of the Core interact with discursive fields and repertoires within two other social worlds: the Archetype Social World in which discourses shape cultures and standards; and an external social world including the public, stakeholders (such as policymakers and foreign partners), and even adversaries. The Archetype Social World will be fully explored in a subsequent section.

Former IC officials and so-called “line” intelligence officers also carry the repertoire into the “ambassadorship” arena with post-employment memoirs and engagements. Thus, “ambassadorship” embeds the Core within another social world of which Core actors are also members in their capacities as U.S. citizens: the public. The “public” as a social world also constitutes a set of implicated actors who are recipients of the messaging. However, because protecting the public is inherent in the IC mission, the public also emerged as an implicated actor in each of the primary social worlds.

Former insiders function as a realistic counterbalance for the public against pop culture “tip of the spear” messaging. Nada Bakos published her memoirs as a CIA “targeter” who aided in catching Iraqi insurgent Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi (Bakos, 2019). Former Deputy Director of the CIA Michael Morrell (2021) hosts a podcast called *Intelligence Matters* in which he interviews former intelligence officials and other notable guests in the wider national security arena. For example, in his episode from March 3, 2021, he conduct an in-depth interview with Adam Schiff, the chairman of the U.S. House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence (HPSCI) on the impact of the politicization of intelligence and the need to de-politicize the committee (Morell, 2021, 41:00) On December 29, 2020, he interviewed veteran CIA officer, Marc Polymeropoulos in relation to declassified intelligence operations in which he had been involved (Morell, 2020, 32:00). In 2018, Gen. James Clapper (USAF, Retired) became the first director of national intelligence to publish his memoirs (Clapper & Brown, 2018). In the first of two books, former

NSA and CIA Director Michael V. Hayden (Gen., USAF, Retired) opened with a dramatic story of a day in 2004 in which a massive failure of NSA's IT architecture created a system-wide outage. With its own pop culture repertoire as "America's ears" (Bamford, 2002; *Joint Document*, 2004; Powers, 1983), NSA's IT failure that day left the country deaf and potentially vulnerable for several hours. Hayden had managed to make an IT failure exciting because of NSA's position at the "tip of the spear."

For the purpose of the Core, "ambassadorship" functions as a site in which actors convey "tip of the spear" to the public through experience and negotiated reality. However, if Protecting the Nation is a form of collective identity, then "ambassadorship" may also function as messaging for insiders to remain relevant. A 2020 research study found that a need to maintain a purpose-driven life guided post-retirement career choices for retired, baby boomer-era intelligence officers (Kramer, 2020). In this way, the repertoire may serve a dual-sided market to shape the narrative around the IC and a platform for former intelligence officers to hold on to self-concepts as central to the mission at the "tip of the spear."

As noted, structures, rules, and processes within the discursive field for the Core bureaucratizes the "tip of the spear" repertoire. However, even the repertoire shapes differently within micro-IC social worlds. For example, the FBI describes its analytic role as a generalized support function for special agents on counterintelligence and other requirements within their purview (Mission and Priorities, 2021). Their version of the repertoire becomes elegantly simple—"We support the agents." Alternatively, living at the "tip of the spear" at DHS places one across six possible missions ranging from border security, counter-terrorism, cyber, immigration enforcement, infrastructure protection, and disaster response (*DHS Careers*, 2021). Consequently, the repertoire may carry nuances according to the micro-collective engaging the narrative.

While a full determination lays beyond the scope of this study, simplicity of mission may have a material relationship to TWB in the intelligence situation because of its impact on how

power is framed in the discourse. Kate, a senior HR official in the IC, had worked in three IC entities ranging from expansive, complex missions to those with narrowly defined areas of focus. She emerged from those experiences with a perception that the entities with narrow missions were less toxic because the lack of mission ambiguity contributed to fewer combative arenas in which positions had to be fought and won:

> [A large IC entity] has always struggled with its identity and what it's there to do. They, too, are spread so thin. [A second large entity] is spread thin, but that's only because they want everything. Probably the most collegial agency that I was ever at was the [narrowly defined entity], and I think it's because their mission is so simple. But yeah, at the [smaller, more defined entity], everybody knew and understood why they were there. (Kate)

Kate's anecdotal theory has empirical merit. Research studies have found relationships between toxicity and complexity (Dagless, 2018), as well as role ambiguity and bullying behaviors (Bowling & Beehr, 2006; Hauge et al., 2007).

The repertoire conveys to the public a model of an intelligence officer who transcends ordinary without troubling that same public with the ambiguities that challenge function. The enormity of the intelligence task is given further romanticism by the secrecy within which operations occur. Consequently, "tip of the spear" extends a cloak around the IC situation so that the pop culture ideal of working there often leaves little room to understand that ordinary human beings carry the burden of doing extraordinary things. This awareness revealed itself in Zeke's (2020) warning in Chapter 4 of an "epic failure" if TWB was not addressed. Mike (2020) linked his ongoing efforts to confront a racially-tinged toxic situation to his sense of patriotism and being part of something larger than himself. Multiple participants assured themselves that their escalating absenteeism and withdrawal never affected their performances—even as many would later admit that their contributions must have declined during ongoing toxic events. Holding Self at the "tip of the spear" created its own ambiguities in toxic events as intelligence officers sought to traverse the dynamic.

Strauss's (1978) description of arenas as microcosms of debate and negotiation reveal hidden complexities when a seemingly straightforward and unifying discursive framework also occurs within a mission environment framed by ambiguity. In fact, the complexities related to "missions within missions" surfaces the potential for a debate over what constitutes a social world in the IC. One can argue that the IC is a contained, macro-social world of multiple social worlds. However, the distinctiveness of missions bound by a larger discourse around Protecting the Nation could also be framed as multiple social worlds within a larger discursive universe. The following section will explore ambiguity in relation to another level of discourse within the Core: Relational Ambiguity.

Relational Ambiguity. A second discourse emerged in which relational significance explored at the end of Chapter 4 surfaced as tangential, situational, and negotiated. This discourse has significant implications for findings in Chapter 4 in which TWB broke both the desire and process of collaboration and sharing for IC officers functioning within the "Folding In" and "Reinforcing Style" primary dimensions. The following section will elevate tensions in the discourse related to bifurcations of power that challenge accountability structures.

Sourcing for this Section. A brief discussion about sourcing for this section is relevant here. Situational analysis recenters data collection away from narrative interviews in favor of extant sources of structured texts, rules, and practices. This discursive focus is designed to minimize analysis of individual meaning in favor of broader explorations of knowledge as an indicator of where power resides in the situation (Clarke, 2005; Hook, 2001). Nevertheless, this section relies heavily on interview data. Those narratives are symbolic of Foucault's (1980, 2002) conceptualization of true power within tacit structures and micro-level processes in ways unavailable in structured discourse appearing in his later works. In fact, no extant sources frame Relational Ambiguity even though the framework is dominant in the narratives.

I might have treated Relational Ambiguity as an overwhelming "site of silence"—an element probably there but not referenced in the discourse (Clarke, 2003, p. 561)—except that

the dynamic is in the narratives as a reflection of where true power resides in subtle and tacit ways. Therefore, its aggregation across the narrative frame makes that distinction hard to support. Rather, Relational Ambiguity as a form of tacit power exerts itself as Foucault's "gaze"—a source of power that no one can see, and may even be absent at times, but exerts its presence by sheer knowledge of its existence (Foucault, 1977). To relegate the dynamic as unimportant would have been inauthentic to the situation and would have marginalized my main objective, which was to understand the situation constitutive of responses to TWB among intelligence officers. The following section explores Relational Ambiguity through the narratives and extant sources where they exist.

Defining Relational Ambiguity. I define Relational Ambiguity as an interpersonal dynamic that devalues formal rank in favor of relational status so that who people are in relation to each other is conditioned on organizational requirements in the moment:

> So, you've got a director, deputy director, chief of staff, and then below you have what are called associate directors [AD]. There's one for operations, one for capabilities, and then they have deputies. A person who I mentored, who I was team lead [over] is now deputy AD. I don't work for her now, but she's technically above me in the block and chain chart. Then, there's another woman that I worked with as a peer, and then I did end up working for her for two years, two and a half years. (Liam)

Ridgeway and Walker (1995) defined status as the degree to which one is liked. However, Liam depicts status in the Core as situational rather than hierarchical. Thus, being "liked" may be conditional as well. Strauss theorized status as a playing field in which members of social worlds claim status, make counterclaims, and compete for power (Strauss, 1969). Hall (1989) followed with his conceptualization of low-context (clear forms of status) and high-context (ambiguous forms of status) cultures, with the latter elevating the importance of tacit structures, tone, and interpersonal interactions. Ambiguity of status emerges within high-context cultures and into broader aspects of Relational Ambiguity at the foundation of those power relationships. The dynamic reduces the "guardrail" function normally played by formal rank as a situational queuing structure and balances it with a shape-shifting social arena in the Core where

referential status of expertise, long-term relationships, and longevity (French & Raven, 1959) form the context.

I argue that Relational Ambiguity is a by-product of the IC's ability to maintain structural flexibility to meet rapidly changing strategic requirements. Within this construct, rank, status, and what separates a peer from a superior are not only fluid but often unclear:

> Now, at the senior level, it's very interesting because how quickly things can shift. The person that you work with could be the person that works for you, could be the person that you next work for, depending on who gets what position and who's promoted and so forth. (Jason)

I could identify no documentation establishing Relational Ambiguity as a goal. Rather, IC wide strategy guidance (*National Intelligence Strategy*, 2019; *Human Capital Vision 2020*, 2014), former senior intelligence officials (Clapper & Brown, 2018; Hayden, 2016, 2018; McConnell, 2007), and Congressional overseers (Schiff, 2020) have applauded structural designs to enable rapid organizational flexibility and transformations. However, in the narrative, individuals and their teams become relegated to implicated actors and actants, respectively, as silenced recipients left to manage the resulting relational challenges. Individuals merge old grudges, experiences, and expectations into the new relationship so that distinguishing between them is complex. The following section will explore Relational Ambiguity as a level of discourse through its repertoire of "situational peer."

Situational Peer as Repertoire. Rank in the IC is bestowed in the form of grades through federal pay schedules (*Salaries & Wages*, 2021). However, even the equalizing nature of federal general pay and grade schedules are situational because where team members reside determines the numeric value of that formal pay grade (*2021 General Schedule [GS] Locality Pay Tables*, 2021). Functional position, reputation, and other forms of referential power balance formal titles. The dynamic emerges into a repertoire of the "situational peer" that challenges members to continually negotiate their status relative to others in the situation, especially when rank and grade do not align:

> My boss was a peer of mine, [but] he was not ahead of me in rank. (Gwen)

> I think she was one grade below me at the time, but we were at that same sort of point. (Maria)

Like a graduate-level academic cohort, intelligence officers may enter service as equals but then experience individualized career trajectories (*Civilian Careers in U.s. Intelligence and National Security*, 2021). Even as they progress at different paces, they anchor onto early relational frameworks in ways that minimize divergent career trajectories later in career:

> We are friends, and we've been friends way before we became branch chiefs. He used to be in the Army as a warrant officer, and that's where we first met when he came to [location redacted]. (Mike)

Situational analysis is designed to locate sources of conflict and tension in the discourse (Clarke, 2005). Rank bestows authority but in ways that rely upon complex assessments of who one is to another. This positional relativity bestows authority onto expertise and seniority even when individuals equal each other in organizational rank. “Situational peer” also emerged as a source of discursive conflict in structures that bifurcate power over operations from the power to influence the individuals who conduct them:

> I'm in charge of the overall mission, but because of the way that the agency is constructed, I am not a supervisor yet of anyone. I don't have any formal supervisory roles. I can't punish them. I can't admonish them. (Joel)

Proximity to the relationally significant could be physical or perceptual. For example, being physically or relationally close to those perceived to be significant to power derives power (Follett, 1924):

> Even though he was not as senior at that time, that was a senior position because of the seniors that he interacted with daily in [redacted]. (Christina)

Distance from authority is its own enabler:

> When you're away from headquarters, when you're away from the “flagpole,” the chief is the king. He controls everything. If you question, "Hey, wait a minute, that's not the way the regulations say.” It's like, "I'm the chief, I'm going to break the rules. If you're standing in my way, it's because you don't understand how things are in the field." (Maria)

Relational privilege from ambiguity becomes particularly vivid when 24x7 and remote teams physically separate managers from personnel, but team leads are physically present:

> I didn't have the opportunity to speak face-to-face, so people were getting their very best communication from, in this case, their team leads who are there face-to-face with them all the time. (Finn)

The "situational peer" repertoire becomes a more vivid message when the operational lead is lower in rank than those they are leading. This messaging projects into the mission and forms tensions within formal structures:

> I was the operational team lead. I think most of division leadership was either [higher in rank] and I was [lower in rank]. I maybe felt intimidated just by the mere fact that I was lower in grade than they were. So, I did not intentionally seek out "face time" with division leadership. (Kit)

The IC encourages intelligence officers to grow their careers and enhance community-wide perspectives through interorganizational rotations, short-term crisis teams, and research sabbaticals. This goal supports broader IC-integration goals to streamline operations and foster cross-entity collaboration (Strickland & Whitlock, 2016; *Vision 2015*, 2008). However, the goals also offer opportunities for meso-ambiguities to "go macro" as movements reshape internal cultures through outsiders. For example, according to 2018 data from DIA's public website, the entity had personnel posted to 160 countries and country teams revealing a complex meso-cultural dynamic. The agency also had four integrated intelligence centers that were regionally aligned with the Americas, Europe/Eurasia, the Middle East, and Asia Pacific. Three directorates oversaw analysis, science and technology research, and operations. Twelve "mission enablers," such as the Chief Information Office and the Office of Partner Engagement, provided support to the core mission (*Defense Intelligence Agency Strategic Approach*, 2018). Opportunities for intra-DIA rotations and postings were supplemented by the IC-wide Joint Duty Assignment (JDA) program, which enabled personnel to complete two-to-three years in another IC or affiliated entity (ODNI, 2020); external programs, such as the Presidential Innovation

Fellows program as a government-wide technology incubator (*Presidential Innovation Fellows*, 2021); and the Military Fellows one-year intensive research program (*Military Fellows*, 2021).

These opportunities echo "situational peer" across entities through longitudinal relational dynamics that sustain as intelligence officers recycle through each other's professional lives. Structures, which are roles, responsibilities, and relationships designed to accomplish the core mission (Burke & Litwin, 1992), make relationships in the IC conditional because these same structures value stability and instability in equal measure. For her unclassified doctoral dissertation, Nolan embedded as a CIA Fellow within the DNI's National Counterterrorism Center, where she observed this "stable instability" first-hand:

> DI [Directorate of Intelligence] analysts routinely undertake assignments in war zones and other dangerous places and put themselves at great risk. People rotate in and out, from six months to two years. Thus, continuity is rare, impacting relationships, trust, and expertise (Nolan, 2013, p. 26)

Members who function within the Core straddle complex tensions between individualistic career goals versus those of the wider organization. They must also navigate when to function independently versus as a member of a team (Hastie, 2011). However, social identity emerges from a sense of being part of a collective whole (Rousseau, 2016; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). The navigational arena is the team.

Cohen and Bailey (1997) defined a team as a group with visible boundaries that function interdependently toward shared outcomes. While the team's cohesion is observable to others, it functions within a wider system and manages relationships that span organizational boundaries. Within the IC, the "team" functions within the Core as a staging arena for negotiating, debating, and driving the mission forward.

Figure 5.5 is a word cloud that I produced using NVivo software to determine aggregate word usage among members of the Core primary social worlds and available texts. I delimited the 500 most commonly used words. I also removed non-substantive references, such as *yeah*, *yes*, *well*, and *hey*; interviewee names; articles, such as *a*, *and*, and *the*; pronouns; and other

words that might be more singularly used or used in multiple ways so that they did not help frame critical elements (e.g., *walked* or *phone*). In the aggregate, *team* was the most used word in the discourse.

Within the repertoire of "situational peer," teams formed arenas for cross-entity relationships, collaboration, and production between social worlds. Co-located teammates and cross-agency partners and rivals drafted proposed findings into intelligence "cycles" that spanned meso- and macro-social worlds to be negotiated and reformed into products that contained consensus support (Richards, 2010). However, IC integration goals have actively promoted opportunities to meld cultures and skills by forming routine, initiative-based, and crisis teams across IC entities with shared equities (Mellers et al., 2015; Zenko, 2015). Therefore, "situational peer" emerged as a repertoire within traditional and virtual teams in which status is based on the team and in the moment.

Figure 5.5

Core Discursive Themes

Research indicates that teams have physical, dialogic, and functional rhythms (Jackson et al., 2011). Co-located teams in the IC were referenced as extended families of individuals to sit, commiserate, and argue with each day. However, in these IC families, the self-censorship normally required to protect sources and methods from uncleared family members and friends no longer applied. Cross-entity teams were promoted as opportunities to span boundaries across cultures and skills, as well as to spawn career opportunities to create new sets of "situational peers."

Disruptions caused by the global Coronavirus-19 (COVID-19) pandemic beginning in late-2019 to early-2020 changed the “team” arena. IC organizations formed new rhythms as entities sought the legal permission and technological capability to expand the classified environment to uncleared environments (Eversden, 2020). However, physical connections between formerly co-located teammates became limited because they were isolated in their homes (Ogrysko, 2020). For actors in toxic situations, this liberation from the traditional environment may have had individualized benefits. However, a new permutation on Relational Ambiguity surfaced in which the operational boundaries for the IC expanded in innovative ways while relational boundaries simultaneously expanded and contracted.

Implicated Actors and Actants. Implicated actors are those who are present but silenced in the situation and those who are as discursively constructed in the situation by others for their own purposes (Clarke, 2005; Clarke & Montini, 1993). Because Core discourse centers on the IC’s core mission, the array of actors implicated by the field are potentially significant. However, I identified two primary implicated actors and actants in the situation constitutive of response to TWB: “Organization, Leadership, and Agency” as a collective set and “Families.”

***Organization, Leadership, and Agency as Implicated Actants*.** Chapter 2 provided a review of secondary discourse on the IC core mission, including analysis, analytical methods, operational challenges, and the impact of reform efforts on the core mission. This discourse reflected the perspectives of IC scholars (both those who had served in the IC and those who had not) as well as the former IC personnel mentioned earlier in the section. A comparison of 212 secondary sources with the findings in this study indicates that “organization, leadership, and agency” bifurcated across the two discursive fields.

"Leadership" as an IC category includes intelligence officers who have achieved the rank within one of the three tiers of Senior Intelligence Service (*Benefits & Pay*, 2021). Seniors hold power over recognition, opportunities, pay, promotion. They wield that power by using analytic standards as implicated actants for evaluation (*ICD 203*, 2015) and performance management systems (*DCIPS Performance Management*, 2021).[8]

Table 5.3

Organization, Leadership, and Agency in Secondary and Core Discourse

Term	Secondary Discourse	Primary Narrative Data
Total Sources	***212***	***20***
Organization	26	285
Leadership	9	212
Agency	38	194

As illustrated in Table 5.3, "leadership" within secondary discourse is tangential. However, in this study, "organization, leadership, and agency" were central to the situation constitutive of response to TWB among intelligence officers. Simply, these frameworks emerged as implicated actants for positioning, justifying, and blaming. They also raised significant implications for how those observing the Core as outsiders image "what goes on there" and how actors within the Core image themselves.

The frameworks represented power in different ways in this study. "Agency" represented benign positionality within the larger situation and, in comparison, to other actors:

> I'm the best candidate at my agency. (Gwen)

"Agency" also became a symbol for who belonged, who did not, and as a collective vulnerability:

> My experience with it [TWB] was from people who came from another agency. There was one [senior] individual who just had a very aggressive nature, and he came over from another agency. (David)

[8] DCIPS governs occupational structure and performance management for the ten IC entities that are governed by the U.S. Department of Defense (*DCIPS Frequently Asked Questions,* 2021). Other entities have separate performance management systems that I could not locate in the public domain.

"Organization" reflected a tension that simultaneously bestowed power, pride, and burden. However, "organization" also had a collective voice that simultaneously reduced other voices:

> It bugged me when the organization tried to say, "We're going to go to the servant leadership model," not because I'm against servant leadership, but it's not just something you can say, "Now, go be a servant leader." (Dana)

"Leadership" was reflected as a symbol of position, collective accountability, and functional empowerment:

> I'm in a position of leadership. (Christina)

"Leadership" was also discursively constructed as a source of poor modeling and accountability:

> It's the organizational structure and the organizational leadership that just reinforces the, "Well, that's how we've always done it." (Celine)

Thus, "Organization, Agency, and Leadership" discursively constructed standards for "leadership." This construction extended to the individuals within those structures as implicated actors. "Leadership" transitioned from "it" to "they" as implicated actors who had dominion over progress or stagnation:

> I'm trying to get leadership to recognize risk of [intelligence disclosure] or whatever, and there are some things that they're not recognizing. (Liam)

As implicated actors, they are discursively constructed but they also wield considerable power over how they are represented through perceived action, response, and attention.

Families. A second set of implicated actors in the Core was "Families." I expected "families" to emerge more transparently in the situation because Core primary actors experience work demands in the form of long hours, crises, deployments to danger zones, and postings, which implicate the intelligence officer and family members alike. Unlike "leadership," which was significant in the situation, "families" emerged as tangential in the passing mention of husbands, wives, children, parents, and "exes." Consequently, while they were not entirely voiceless (Clarke, 2005; Clarke & Montini, 1993), their voices were muted and in the background:

> I think my husband heard a lot more than he wanted to because I would go home and complain every day about just how toxic that work environment was. (Christina)

However, “families” were not entirely without power in the situation because career choices became a collective decision by family members, friends, and significant others:

> I came here because of my wife. She's a [physician]. So, it goes back to family, and she has family close by. (Mike)

No data was available in the open domain on the number of IC personnel who are related. However, the minimization of “families” in the Core is more remarkable given the commonality of “intel families” discussed in Chapter 4. Intelligence officers recruit children as legacy into the “family business.” Also, intelligence officers marry, divorce, and remarry each other, which blurs boundaries between home and work:

> Like a hill family. Like an Appalachian family. They even inter-married. [Agency redacted] employees not only married each other, they divorced each other, and then married colleagues. You never quite knew who was connected to whom, so you were always careful. (Kate)

Summary. The “tip of the spear” repertoire situates Core actors within a high-stakes arena in which the “self” becomes embedded in abstractions of what it means to serve a mission. Fluidity and unpredictability related to global events and the way in which pop culture perpetuates images of life at the “spear” function as supports to the repertoire. Taken together, Core discourses, discursive repertoires, and implicated actors and actants frame a paradoxical social world. Actors support the core mission while receiving support and subjugation from processes and structures designed to assist them. Thus, Relational Ambiguity and its repertoire of “situational peer” have a reductive quality when these dynamics become frameworks for how to respond effectively to TWB.

The importance of structure—even when ambiguous—permeates discourse constructed within the Core around organizations and their human representatives in other social worlds. This misalignment may have transpired because of the power that actors primarily functioning

within a second social world have to influence Core discourse. The following section will discuss the Archetype Social World through its discourses of Culture Shaping and Standard Setting.

The Archetype Social World

A second social world in the situation constitutive of response to TWB among intelligence officers is the Archetype. Within the Archetype, power emerged within a discursive field designed to construct the ideal archetype for intelligence officers and their organizations. Unlike the Core, the unclassified discourse available within the Archetype was diverse and robust. The primary discourses, Culture Shaping and Standard Setting, surfaced in policy documents, workforce plans, Congressional testimony, media interviews, and speeches. While IC leadership does not discuss reasons for making so much information about its operations publicly available, I argue that the availability and context for information form more than window dressing. Within its discursive repertoires of "You are the Model" and "A Place for You," the archetype shapes internal culture, informs possible recruits about what that archetype is, and attracts a workforce consistent with long-term strategies. Table 5.4 is a taxonomy of the Archetype. The discussion begins with an exploration of the primary actors in the social world.

Table 5.4

Archetype Social World Taxonomy

Social World	Primary Actors	Discursive Field	Discursive Repertoire	Site of Silence	Implicated Actors
Archetype	Senior Leadership	Culture Shaping	You are the Model	Training the Leaders	Analysts
	Public Communications	Standard Setting	A Place for You		Operations Personnel
			Managers Set the Tone		Supervisors

Primary Archetype Actors. The primary actors governed by the Archetype are senior leaders, as well as those representing the internal IC and its public "face." They sculpt ideal images for functioning within the community, standards for advancement, and avatars for

personnel. While the Archetype as a social world includes multiple occupations, senior leadership cultivates the discourse to convey internal avatars and preferred culture, while public communications and corporate communications personnel craft and target messages at external stakeholders and potential recruits.

As actors, leadership "manages the managers" who most directly oversee the Core and other segments of the IC. They have a core mission of their own to execute macro- and meso-level policy, guidance, and goals (*Senior Executive Service*, 2021). However, they also build archetypes within preferred behaviors, standards, and ways of operating through modeling, accountability, and guiding others (Clapper, 2012). In this way, they shape the internal image for their organizations and the broader IC.

I use the term "public communications" to encapsulate actors with responsibility to shape the public image of intelligence officers and IC organizations. For example, graphic designers might construct images for displays, social media, websites, and other publicly available discourse designed to visualize the IC. Editors might write the content to align with these visual messages. Communications specialists might perform outreach services to dignitaries and other visitors, such as liaison and protocol. Simply, in collaboration with senior leadership (and even the "ambassadors" discussed in the previous section), they craft a public image that the IC wants to project to the public but also internally. When crafted images diverge from internal perceptions, they can paradoxically shape responses to TWB. The following section will explore how these actors intersect with the field by discussing two levels of discourse: Culture Shaping and Standard Setting.

Culture Shaping. I adopted the term Culture Shaping from "A Pledge to Our People," a document released by the Office of the Director of National Intelligence in 2019 (Coats et al., 2019) as a renewed commitment to address sexual harassment and other forms of discrimination in the IC. The document, posted on the ODNI's website, begins with an identity statement about who the IC leadership was and represented: "We shape our culture, mission,

and workforce" (para. 1) While the intent behind the document was clear, the document's power emerged from the signature page showing the names of the directors of each of the IC entities, which depicted the "Pledge" as the unified force of an entire community.

Chapter 2 reviewed theory and empirical research on the "self" as a concept that emerges individually and relationally. Chapter 4 demonstrated the role that maintaining self-concepts played in choices of response to TWB. However, research demonstrates that the "self" is a triplicate of individual, relational, and collective selves that are separate (Ellemers et al., 2002; Spears, 2001) and ranked (Nehrlich et al., 2019). As this section will show, IC entities leverage Culture Shaping discourse to craft the internal and public narrative about the IC around an archetypical constructed "self" as an intelligence officer.

Culture Shaping discourse includes speeches, intelligence sanitized for unclassified release, recruiting sites on unclassified websites and career consortiums, and publicly released value statements. In a 2012 speech to newly inducted members of the SIS ranks, then Director of National Intelligence James Clapper unveiled an 11-point directive of what would be expected of them in these new leadership roles. The list was expansive and explicitly aligned to organization building, leading people, and courage (Clapper, 2012). Critically important, this speech was published on the ODNI website as a statement to the rest of the workforce and the public about his archetype for the IC senior leader. Within this discursive field, two repertoires emerged: "You are the Model" and "A Place for You."

You are the Model as Repertoire. In the first of two books on his experiences in the IC, former NSA and CIA Director, Mike Hayden (2016), recounts a speech he gave to newly inducted CIA intelligence officers before issuing them their oaths of office:

> You may be the only face of America that the people you recruit will ever see. And when you have recruited them, they are placing their fate and their family's fate in your hands. Don't ever forget that. (p. 272)

In these two sentences, Hayden (2016) described Culture Shaping in a discursive field that permeates the archetype. One does not merely work in the IC. Being an intelligence officer

assumes a commitment to an ethos that everyone in the situation sees. Geertz (1957) defined ethos as the tone and quality by which individuals live their lives. Ethos is more than a value system. Ethos is a manner of living that includes forethought, emotional attachment, and a justification for following a particular course of action (Voronov & Weber, 2016). In Hayden's statement, the ethos carried a moral burden of commitment to foreign recruits as implicated actors—as extant individuals in the situation who may be on the periphery of the social world but implicated by the events unfolding within it (Clarke, 1991). His call to "never forget" implied a burden that imposed an unrelenting power over the intelligence officer.

Former deputy Attorney General and FBI director James Comey (2018) also established the role of ethos in his decision to rebel against perceived efforts by U.S. President Donald J. Trump to demand loyalty to him over his sworn duty a larger set of loyalties to uphold the U.S. Constitution:

> I learned from those around me and tried to pass on to those I worked with that there is a higher loyalty in all of our lives—not to a person, not to a party, not to a group. The higher loyalty is to lasting values, most important the truth. (p. xii)

Hayden's, Clapper's, and Comey's words crafted an archetype model for leadership that triangulated Rowe's (2001) distinction between visionary (values- and beliefs-setting), strategic (viability influencing), and managerial (stability holding) leadership. They also communicated tacit acceptance of the model put forth by Ashforth and colleagues (2016), which frames leadership as theater in which personnel watch, learn, and identify with their leadership. This identification helps to align the individual and collective "self" so that Culture Shaping becomes symbiotic within two images. One image establishes the archetype for what their leaders expect from them to advance in the career; the other as an archetype for what they may expect from their leaders.

When the messaging for what the model intelligence officer is finds synergy with perceptions of ground-level culture, the Archetype thrives and services the IC's goals. However, the marginalizing effect of TWB sends a different message: "You are the anti-Archetype."

Alternatively, one senior IC leader framed a darker perspective on “You are the Model” that emerges when TWB becomes ingrained in the collective discourse:

> Some people are willing to learn it, and then they're willing to repeat it. It becomes the proving ground, and this is the culture. So, it becomes ingrained in what is to be expected if you're a young analyst. It’s almost like it could be like a hazing—the hazing, then you're part of our tribe. (Vickie)

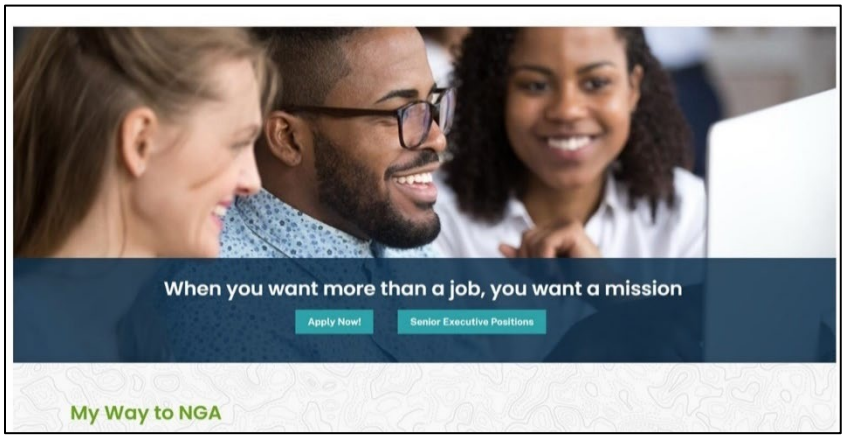
I discuss social media as a platform for culture shaping within a subsequent section. However, the topic of how IC websites are used within the field is relevant here. Public websites are a critical tool for culture shaping within the Archetype. Each IC entity maintains an unclassified website as a storefront for organizational identity represented in taglines. NGA, as the IC lead for GEOINT analysis, lays claim to being the “nation’s eyes” (*Nga Director Presents New Vision at GEOINT Symposium*, 2010) and “showing the way” (*NGA—Careers*, 2021). DHS, which partners with the FBI against domestic threats, touts honor and integrity as it “safeguards the American people, our homeland, and our values” (*Mission | DHS*, 2021). The FBI stays “ahead of the threat” (*Mission and Priorities*, 2021).

Culture shapes values and norms, which in turn shape organizational climate (Burke & Litwin, 1992). TWB destroys organizational climates by way of severed relationships. Kusy and Holloway (2009) found that performance solutions to address TWB were more effective when respectful engagement was integrated into the organization’s value system. As Chapter 4 demonstrated, TWB poses a direct threat to sensitive collaborative structures fundamental to the core mission. To support this model, the IC uses its web presence to convey more than its archetypical vision. They also shape the cultural values they seek to promote. The CIA promotes “service” to country, agency, and self (in that order), integrity to speak the truth, and excellence in the highest standards (*Core Values—Central Intelligence Agency*, 2016). The Office of Naval Intelligence touts “honor, courage, and commitment” (*Office of Naval Intelligence | Who We Are*, 2020, para. 3).

As noted, the IC makes no discernible distinction between culture shaping efforts directed at its existing workforce or potential recruits. However, the visible links between pages touting mission and values and those that enable individuals to apply for intelligence officer positions are notable. For example, the NGA recruiting page shown in Figure 5.6 aligns its core values and recruiting goals in subtle but unmistakable ways. The message is clear: You would not have a job but a mission. However, something else becomes notable in the image: the faces on display. The two women—one African American and one Caucasian—and the African American man are avatars for culture shaping within an agency that is actively seeking greater diversity in its technical "big data" ranks.

Figure 5.6

Recruiting for Mission



NGA – Careers [Image]. 2021. National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency. https://www.nga.mil/careers/1595879126287_Your_Career.html
Used by permission.

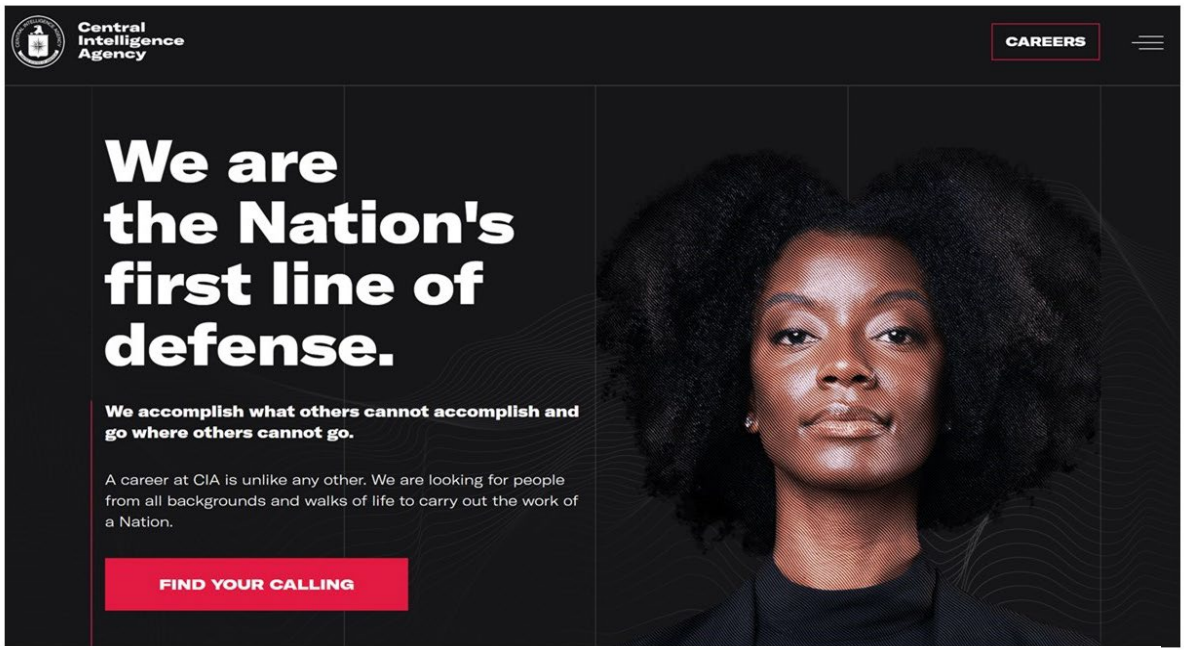
The 2019 National Intelligence Strategy directly links greater diversity with national security and lists the goal as number three of seven enterprise objectives (*National Intelligence Strategy*, 2019). The progress has been uneven. Women made up 41.2 % of new hires across the IC in 2018, the latest period for which numbers are available. However, they remain overrepresented at lower pay grades. Ethnic minority hiring increased by less than two % during the same period. Also, attrition rates for minorities and women remained only slight lower than the numbers hired during the same period for both groups. Peoples with disabilities (PWD) comprised only 10.7 % of the new hires in that period; the attrition rates were nearly even at 10.3 % (*Annual Demographic Report*, 2018). Consequently, culture shaping efforts need a willing partnership with those they seek to shape. As I write this paragraph, the IC

has unveiled a new direction in its efforts to reshape the diversity of its workforce. I explore this topic through the messaging of its discursive repertoire: “A Place for You.”

***A Place for You as Repertoire*.** In her 2020 testimony to the U.S. House of Representatives Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence (HPSCI), the ODNI’s director of Equal Opportunity and Diversity (EEOD), Rita Sampson (2019), testified about the IC’s uneven progress on recruiting women and others from historically marginalized groups. For Sampson, the problem was the message: “We need to educate minority communities that there is a place for them in the IC.”

Figure 5.7

Representation of “A Place for You”



We are the nation’s first line of defense [Image]. (2021). Central Intelligence Agency. cia.gov. *Used by permission.*

Although this recruitment effort is IC-wide, the CIA’s effort has been notably transparent. The CIA launched a revamped website in January 2021 designed to change the discursive repertoire of its archetype. As depicted in Figure 5.7, the homepage of the site shows an African American woman in all-black against an all-black background and framed by the message, “We are the Nation's first line of defense” (CIA, 2021). Refreshing the page reveals an image of an

individual of a different ethnicity each time, each conveying the message that “they” are the first line of defense for the country.

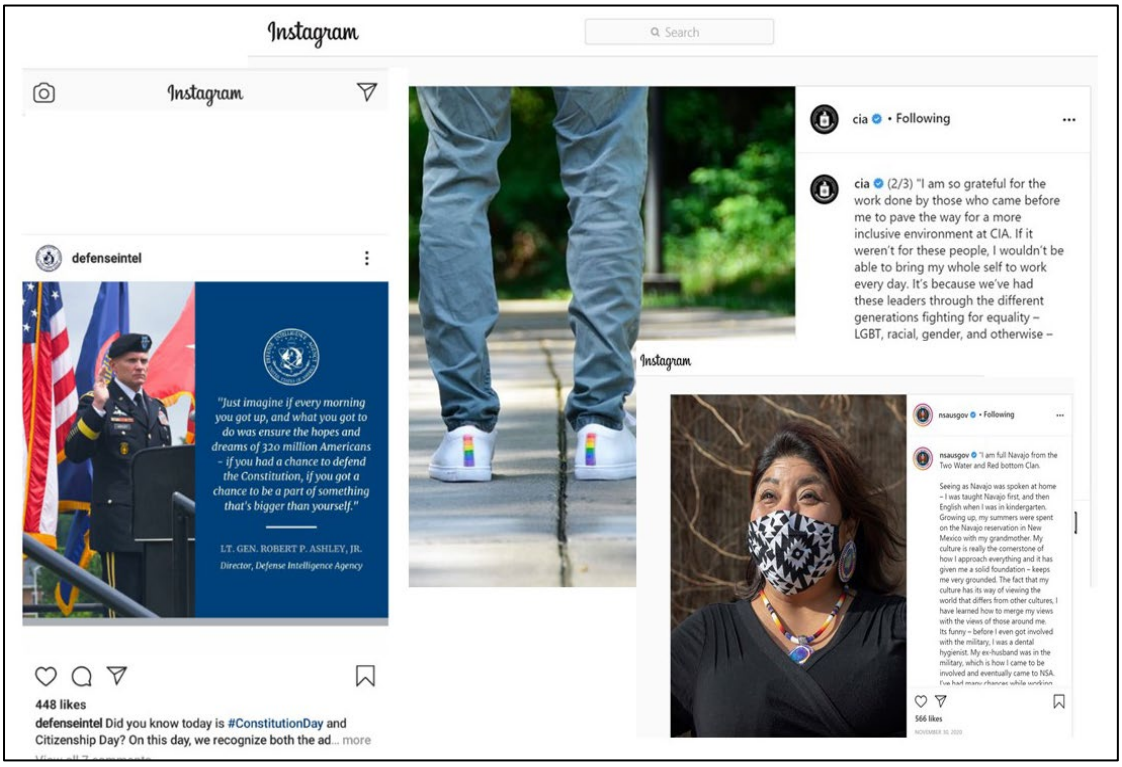
The revamped website designed to boost minority recruitment complements a wider discursive repertoire that has emerged in IC social media campaigns. IC agencies have shaped culture through social media messaging that conveys “belonging” through the words of employees already there. The message extends beyond minority recruitment back to the wider archetype for the culture they seek to shape. In the collage in Figure 5.8, an intelligence officer who identifies with the LGBTQIA community talks about the sacrifices that others made before him. The image subtly titillates with the mystery of working there by hiding his identity (*Humans of CIA—I’m Comfortable Being Out*, 2020). However, the rainbow flag on his shoes as a common emblem of the LGBTQIA community is central in the image. DIA’s Director (*DIA on Instagram—Just Imagine*, 2020) draws on ethos by asking the viewer to “Just imagine” waking up every day to defend the Constitution. A Navajo employee at NSA talks about her heritage and its contribution to the NSA mission (*National Security Agency on Instagram—Navajo Heritage*, 2020).

The challenge for the IC is ensuring that recruiting images mirror the experiences on the ground. Ethnic minority participants in the grounded theory segment explored micro-political environments that conveyed a different message. These experiences were particularly vivid among the intelligence officers posted to offsite centers away from headquarters. They reported that employees in these entities tended to be from the local area, where racial and gender imbalances were more significant, and employees rotated to other IC entities less frequently. Local norms in conflict with diversity and inclusion goals often overshadowed IC objectives in ways that became transparent in practice. In particular, they objected to recruiting efforts implying that diversity would be welcome before a normative shift occurred among the working population. They also interpreted this dynamic as an effort to shift the responsibility for changing minds to those victimized by them—a problem they associated with leadership:

> It's just a different mindset, how part of the problem is being used to find the solution. Because the reality is, some of these seniors are in a seat knowing that they are the problem. (Lamar)

Figure 5.8

IC Culture Shaping Through Social Media



Just imagine [Social Media]. (2020). Defense Intelligence Agency on Instagram. https://www.instagram.com/p/CFPpobfpuhU/
Used by permission.
I am grateful [Social Media]. (2020). Central Intelligence Agency on Instagram. https://www.instagram.com/p/CDUOiSsgXsm/
Used by permission.
I am full Navajo [Social Media]. (2020). National Security Agency on Instagram. https://www.instagram.com/p/CIPeZcCAq8N/
Used by permission.

This bifurcation of the Archetype ideal and the micro-political frame in some segments of the IC converge with another permutation on the repertoire of the IC as a home for patriots. The message links "self," entity, and patriotism. As an example, DIA's (2018)promotional video on YouTube constructs this narrative of the "patriotic self." The 6:59-minute video opens at dusk, where the sun gleams off the DIA headquarters' glass frame. Ten seconds into the video the viewer sees the DIA flag flying next to the U.S. flag. The two flags appear to be the same size

and fly at equal heights. The power behind the message lies in its implicit nature: “DIA is patriotism.” Forty-five seconds into the video, the link between the archetype of the “patriotic self” and the viewer’s “self” completes when a frame emerges to say, “We are DIA.” The video then transitions through a series of frames to show ordinary people doing extraordinary things. However, the extraordinary people depicted in the video are not operating in war zones. They are sitting at computers.[9]

Research suggests that messages around patriotism may have countervailing effects that conflict with diversity and inclusion goals. Individuals carry multiple identities and images of the “self” (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Collins, 1998). Sorting and compartmentalizing these “selves” (Ellemers & Rink, 2005) helps them to make sense of where they belong in organizations and in society at large (Hogg & Terry, 2000; Hogg et al., 1995;). Patriotism as an ethos may represent conflicting ideals among groups depending on whether they perceive that they are stratified in the dominant or subordinate group. For example, research in one study found that the range of views on patriotism and degrees of what W. E. B. DuBois referred to as “double consciousness” (DuBois, 1903) aligned with ethnic identity among African American, biracial, and multiracial students (T. Shaw, 2013).

This conflict is not the private purview of ethnic minorities. Research has also found that group dominance and patriotism correlated so that Caucasians who valued social stratification into superior and inferior groups also demonstrated higher levels of patriotism (Peña & Sidanius, 2002; Sidanius et al., 1997). Thus, the IC may consider whether patriotism as a laudable recruiting value could also impede overall diversity and inclusion goals in the current polarized political environment without efforts to link a generalized set of positive values.

“A Place for You” also includes discourse around another archetype emergent in the discourse—seeking the “big data” technical expert. Within the Archetype, discourse centers on

[9] The full video may be viewed at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fmjMW8ffXho%20.

constructing an ideal that will be attractive to top technical talent, during a time when the IC seeks to maintain a competitive edge over U.S. adversaries (Reilly, 2015; Symon & Tarapore, 2015) and in an environment when Silicon Valley may be the biggest adversary of all. To make intelligence careers more attractive as alternatives to "big tech" when Silicon Valley compensation outstrips government salaries, the IC promotes the *Right, Trusted, Agile Workforce* program to increase skill interchangeability with industry (Van Sloun, 2020). However, ethos is an inducement with which the IC has a competitive edge over industry: "A Place for You" to serve your country.

Public engagements within "A Place for You" intersect with the Core repertoire of "tip of the spear" in its culture shaping. Like former IC officials and intelligence officers as ambassadors for the profession, current IC officials engage in public events to convey messages about the archetype IC mindset. NGA recruits for creativity, critical thinking, and writing skills even within that highly technical, analytic missions (Thornton, 2016). A 2017 promotional video placed on YouTube by CIA proclaims that, whatever your skills, they have a mission for you (CIA, 2017).

However, the "place" must have a climate that is as attractive as the mission. Sherry Van Sloun (2020), the ODNI's Assistant Director of Human Capital, recently discussed what kept intelligence officers engaged: the feeling that their work is important; good engagement and feedback from supervisors; and an inclusive environment where leaders built a strong culture around the mission. As discussed earlier in this section and in Chapter 4, the distance between Archetype ideals at the institutional level and their use in practice may be further than Archetype actors perceive. The result may be reflected in the higher rates of attrition among ethnic minority intelligence officers referenced earlier (*Annual Demographic Report*, 2018) and subpar accountability measures found in Chapter 4. The following section will discuss "standard setting" as a discourse designed to manage and promote this engagement through structure, rules, and process.

Standard Setting. The Archetype also includes a second discursive frame: Standard setting. As a discourse, Standard Setting includes stated and documented metrics, procedures, rules, and processes for conduct. As a framework, the discourse includes standards that senior leaders set for others as symbols and representatives of their entities.

The previously-mentioned "pledge" signed by each of the entity directors in 2019 was intended as a discursive "force" for culture shaping. The document embraces standard setting directly: "We create standards and govern the workforce" (Coats et al., 2019, para. 1).The document established IC-wide standards for each IC employee, regardless of rank or position. Establishing "shared accountability" and "transparency," the document pledged a commitment by the collective to explore proactively the extent of harassment and discrimination within their organizations and hold managers accountable for addressing the behavior.

IC leaders use a variety of discursive methods for standard setting. Like mechanisms to promote culture shaping, performance objectives and strategies for accountability are published on public platforms (*Joint Strategy;* 2020). However, as the situational center of gravity for the IC, most publicly available documentation can be found on the ODNI platform. Public statements and documentation emphasize competencies and training for middle managers and others on a leadership trajectory as the focus (Sampson, 2019) while holding them accountable for "empathy" and accountability in real time (Coats et al., 2019; *Joint Strategy to Advance Equal Employment Opportunity, Diversity, and Inclusion within the United States Intelligence Community 2020–2023*, 2020). The IC may use a multiplicative approach in tightening standards to confront TWB. However, the focus is on one collective: middle managers.

The term *manager* is broad in scope, and at times, ambiguous. The "National Strategy" delineates "Functional" (managers of disciplines), "National Intelligence" (the DNI's principal advisors), "Program" (IC element heads), and "Enterprise" (align entity-specific and business functions) managers (*National Intelligence Strategy of the United States of America 2019*, 2019). Most of these positions have operational management responsibility, even if they have

the rank of senior leaders. However, in the IC, mid-level managers have operational management responsibility for organizations even as they are also expected to perform like senior leaders.

Like senior leaders, manager positions in the IC exist within tiers that designate rank and concomitant responsibilities. The tiers span first-line supervisors to middle, organizational-level managers. For example, for the ten DoD-led IC agencies, DCIPS is the prevailing performance management infrastructure and outlines three management tiers. Work Level 4 includes mid-level managers who oversee the fiduciary health of the organization, make strategic decisions, and oversee first-line supervisors. Work Levels 2 and 3 include first-line supervisors who oversee units of personnel. The distinction between levels 2 and 3 is the size of the unit and the complexity of the work. The document does not define “complex” (*DCIPS Occupational Structure*, 2020).

A full review of the literary trajectory underlying foundational leadership theories lies beyond the scope of this paper. Nevertheless, what constitutes a “manager” versus a “leader” remains a source of debate, although the literature has evolved from the “great man” theories of the nineteenth century (Carlysle,1866). In 1985, Bennis and Nanus carved a rhetorical cut-line between leaders and managers: managers do things right, while leaders do the right thing. By 2007, Ford and Harding Hs fostered identity-based theories. Uhl-Bien and colleagues explored leadership as a relational phenomenon not centered on one actor in the dynamic but in the social interaction between them (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; M. Uhl-Bien, 2011; Uhl-Bien & Marion, 2009).

The significance of foundational literature on leadership to the IC is that the community appears to have adopted a hybrid approach between management and leadership. An analysis of documentation establishing scope and competencies for IC mid-level managers makes no meaningful distinction between managerial and leadership responsibilities for the roles. Intelligence Community Directive (ICD) 651 (2019) establishes six competencies for IC

managers: accountability, communication, critical thinking, engagement and collaboration, leadership and integrity, and management proficiency. Additionally, organizational managers hold a core responsibility for the units under them, while they are also responsible for furthering community-wide goals for IC mission integration (*ICD 900*, 2013). In the IC, managers are expected to manage down, lead up, and vision across.

Standard Setting Repertoire—Managers Set the Tone. The discursive repertoire for culture shaping discourse in the IC centered on the modeling role that senior leaders played. The repertoire of "Managers Set the Tone" shifted the focus to managers and those aspiring to be senior leaders. The focus on mid-level managers as the touchpoint to address TWB, discrimination, and other destructive workplace dynamics permeates the messaging. "Middle management competencies are a major focus in setting the tone," said Sampson (2019) during her HPSCI testimony. The implicit message was that standards for managers who set the tone also shape the culture.

The effort cuts a wide swath. The aforementioned "Joint Strategy" on diversity and inclusion (*Joint Strategy,* 2020) and the "National Intelligence Strategy" (*National Intelligence Strategy*, 2019) cross-reference efforts to empower managers to confront diversity and inclusion shortcomings in their organizations. However, the documents tacitly imply that the power to confront the problem has not existed in the past. The documents in tandem with the aforementioned "Pledge" target enhanced training coupled with more stringent accountability measures for mid-level managers as measures to drive meaningful change.

Tangential to the repertoire is the state of flux for managerial and leader competencies in the IC. The path to leadership in the IC has traditionally been strong technical expertise and supervisory experience. However, technical expertise has not always yielded the best leaders of people—or even managers who wanted to lead:

> The word culture, at first, was anathema. Nobody wanted to talk about culture. We had the hardest time getting anybody interested. I had a senior leader . . . I mean, a very

> senior leader, who said, "Yeah, no . . . I don't do that. I don't get involved in that stuff." (Lisa)

Current promotion systems in the IC permit either a managerial or technical path, which allows top technical talent to compete for specific issue-related positions that do not require personnel or programmatic experience. However, the IC has begun to realign standards away from promoting into managerial and senior ranks based on technical expertise in favor of identifying strong leaders early (Long, 2017).

> They're also coming clean that a lot of the people they promoted to leadership positions are technically proficient but can't pick their folks out of a lineup. And they're also learning that doesn't change even as the complaining workforce becomes the leaders. (Chris)

Elements within the situation can be sources of contradiction and tension (Foucault, 1972). Others can be sites of silence as elements that should be there but do not reflect in the discourse (Clarke, 2003). One source of tension emerged within the repertoire of “Managers Set the Tone”: whether the discursive focus is misplaced.

The IC emphasizes training in emotional intelligence and empathy for managers (Coats et al., 2019). However, some participants questioned where the managerial focus remains in practice, particularly in overseeing interpersonal behavior in an environment where managers believe the mission needs them more than the people do:

> We value mission over leadership. And the “we” isn't just supervisors. You have people who won't do anything [about TWB]. Bystanders. In some cases, they won't do anything because they don't see anything, even though if they were paying attention, if they had any eyes open or any ears open, they would've seen it. But, what they'll say to you when you investigate it, either with an EO hat, a culture executive hat, an Ombudsman hat, is they'll say, "Look, I get it. Somebody was offended by something someone said, they brushed it off. I get it. Yeah, I guess if I had heard that I probably would have done something, but it's not like we're paid to be watchman." (Chris)

Tensions also emerged in relation to the efficacy of the overall effort. Senior executives interviewed for this study argued that downstream leadership development is not a new repertoire. My research indicates that leadership development, managerial training, and competencies have been key initiatives since at least 2006, the earliest document I could

identify for this study (*Five-Year Strategic Human Capital Plan*, 2006; *Five-Year Human Capital Plan Annex*, 2006):

> Leadership development programs have been implemented by previous directors, and it's meant to help educate leaders on how to be leaders, not just managers. There's also been more training to bring awareness to the situation but changing culture is slow. These are things that have been happening, I would say, over a 10-year period, I would have anticipated us to have made more progress if we were actually serious about changing that culture. (Jason)

Like the complexities associated with Relational Ambiguity explored during the Core Social World discussion, the line between "management" and "leadership" does not easily align with rank and position. Additionally, when distinctions emerge—such as when mid-level managers transition to the senior executive ranks—the leadership mindset may develop more slowly than the redesignation of title. "Moving from being a doer to an overseer, from being developed to being the developer, from being the follower to the leader of followers" (Long, 2017, para. 15). Therefore, the transition carries a set of expectations that may exist in an ideal that may not be materialize early:

> We tell ourselves, once someone makes senior, it changes. But they were just [GS]-15s on a Friday. What really changes? (Chris)

Sites of Silence—Training the Leaders. I could identify no discourse related to leadership training for senior leaders. This absence was particularly notable because the Core repertoire of "organization, agency, and leadership" reflected an equity in continued developmental focus for leaders. Additionally, given that the transition toward leadership development programs emphasizing the ability to lead over technical expertise are relatively new, I considered that discourse might promote sustaining leadership development for those senior executives who moved into the ranks prior to the transition in repertoire. I asked one senior IC-level executive if the focus on mid-level managers stemmed from a presumption that senior leaders were fully developed as leaders of people:

> The focus or emphasis is on that mid-level manager because that is where most people have the highest touch points on that day-to-day. If you look at the organization sort of as a pyramid, very few people are on a day-to-day touch with the senior most official.

> And I think there are different initiatives that we could certainly work on for the senior-most leadership. They're [the managers] the ones that are setting the tone (Vickie)

The Archetype's focus on culture and standard setting centered on an ideal of intelligence officer ethos of mission, people, diversity, and inclusivity through a framework of building better managers as leaders. This focus raised contradictions to the challenges that emerged in Chapter 4 regarding diversity and inclusion, as well as the discourse in play within the Core with its focus on senior leadership as a repertoire. Simply, the importance of senior leadership as a discursive repertoire within the Core and its emergence as a site of silence within the Archetype suggest a significant disconnect between two discursive frameworks. Chapter 4 referenced levels of confusion and disillusionment by intelligence officers with contradictions between institutional ideals and practice. These contradictions formed conditions as they moved among dimensions of response to TWB in efforts to hold "self." The following section explores a third social world and discursive field in this contradictory framework. The final social world and discursive field in the study moves the debate away from culture and standards to a more rigid discourse around law, regulations, and policy. The next section discusses the Compliance Social World.

The Compliance Five Social World

The final social world relevant to response to TWB among intelligence officers is Compliance Five. The Compliance Five contains a level of discourse centering on the legal and regulatory governance. Unlike Core and Archetype, micro-discourses align with and legitimize five micro-collectives within Compliance Five, although they partner under the same discursive field. Consequently, this section is structured somewhat differently than the other sections. I begin the discussion by briefly identifying the single discourse within the field: Obligation. I segment the initial part of the discussion by the five collectives. Then, I explore the Complaint Process as a negotiated arena. Finally, I discuss "I Work for the Agency" as the primary repertoire within Obligation.

Table 5.5

Compliance Social World Taxonomy

Social World	Primary Actors	Discursive Field	Discursive Repertoire	Arenas & Boundaries	Site of Dissent	Implicated Actors
Compliance Five	IG	Obligation	I Work for the Agency	Complaint Process (Arena)	Leave, Don't File	Seniors
	HR			Complaints (Boundary Object)		Managers
	EEO IGC Ombudsman					Analysts Operations

Obligation. Compliance Five includes a discursive field related to legal, policy, and regulatory frameworks governing IC operations and redress. Because of the classified missions for the 18 IC entities, the applicability of specific federal requirements is both entity dependent, and in some cases, classified. For example, the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) tracks workforce data across the executive branch of the U.S. government. However, CIA, NGA, DIA, NSA, and ODNI are exempt from OPM tracking infrastructure in the open domain because workforce totals at those agencies are classified (*FedScope*, 2021). An analysis of every governing structure lies beyond the scope of this paper but is also not directly relevant to the research question. Rather, the alignment of specific collectives, discourses, and how they interact is relevant. The following section will explore each of these social worlds and their legitimizing frameworks:

Inspector General. The Inspector General's (IG's) office for each IC entity has investigatory oversight of federal programs. Within that function, the IG conducts audits, inspections, and investigations of suspected programmatic abuse. Within the ODNI, the IG has designated responsibility within that entity but also a larger coordination role across the IC (*Intelligence Community Oversight*, 2020; *Office of the Inspector General*, 2020). The IG would

play a role in cases in which toxic events included abuse of federal programs, funding, and facilities.

IGs across the federal government are statutorily mandated by Title 5a (U.S. Code, 1978). The Intelligence Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2010 authorized IC-wide responsibilities for the ODNI IG (M. K. Atkinson, 2020). IC entities structure their IG organizations in compliance with codified reporting structures and federal mandates. For example, while NSA is under DoD's reporting authority, it functions as an independent IC entity with its own IG (*National Security Agency Office of the Inspector General*, 2021). Conversely, the "bureau" status for the FBI and the U.S. Department of State Bureau of Intelligence and Research (State/INR) place those organizations under the IG responsibilities for their parent agencies (*Bureau of Intelligence and Research*, 2021; *U.S. Department of Justice Office of the Inspector General*, 2021).

Human Resources. Human Resource (HR) officers in IC entities mirror those of their counterparts in other federal agencies. Their responsibilities are broad and cover five core functions: staffing, development, compensation, safety and health, and employee and labor relations. Under these responsibilities, they work directly with seniors, managers, and employees to align agency prerogatives and employee responsibilities, oversee employee wellness programs, provide mediation, and manage adverse actions (OPM, 2020).

An array of federal, as well as public, regulations govern each HR segment separately. State laws and regulations also govern IC entities located in those jurisdictions. This segmentation constructs multiple micro-worlds within the HR function. For example, Northeastern University has compiled 12 federal laws under five responsibility segments to which the HR function is obligated (Joubert, 2009). Even within adverse actions, the context of the grievance guides which regulatory framework applies. For example, grievance procedures for instances of TWB involving incidents covered under Title VII of the U.S. Civil Rights Act (1964) would fall under that regulatory umbrella. However, instances not covered by Title VII

would fall under OPM conflict grievance processes dependent upon occupational “class,” the origin of the complaint (e.g., performance or conduct), and other defining factors (*Employee Rights & Appeals*, 2021).

Equal Employment Office. The Equal Employment Office (EEO) has the responsibility for monitoring, tracking, and reporting compliance with agency diversity and inclusion progress for the IC. Within these responsibilities, EEO also oversees compliance with the mandates established in the overarching plans and strategies to achieve diversity and inclusion goals (*Equal Employment Opportunity Strategy,* 2016; *Joint Strategy*, 2020). They form a tracking function for the IC but also a remedial function when covered events emerge.

The predominant federal mandate governing EEO in the IC is Title VII (1964), which establishes the regulatory framework for antidiscrimination laws in the U.S.. Title VII covers specific classes under which the law applies, including discriminatory practices related to race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy, sexual orientation, or gender identity), national origin, age (40 or older), disability, and genetic information (including family medical history; EEOC, 2021). While EEO is significantly invested in diversity and inclusion initiatives across the IC, offices with routine management of those programs are subsumed within the HR framework rather than EEO. Other frameworks governing EEO responsibilities in the IC include the NoFEAR Act to protect those reporting violations from reprisal (NoFEAR Act, 2002); Management Directive 715, which establishes policy guidance for EEOs across the U.S. federal government (EEOC, 2020); and 29 CFR 1614.102, which provides oversight guidance for each entity’s responsibilities to build affirmative programs promoting diversity and inclusion (*Electronic Code of Federal Regulations,* 2020). ICD 110 sets out antidiscrimination policy and procedures for the IC (*ICD 110*, 2009).

Office of General Counsel. IC entities maintain Offices of General Counsel (OGC) as their primary legal representatives or have access to OGCs in their parent agencies. OGCs function in an advisory capacity and represent entities in litigation. Additionally, OGCs will play

this advisory role for policymakers in an IC oversight role (*Legal Careers in the IC Flyer*, 2020). IC websites promote mandates covering each programmatic aspect of the entities they serve, including fiduciary, contract, acquisitions and procurement, employment, ethics, intellectual property, international law, and legislation (*Legal Careers in the IC Flyer*, 2020; *Office of the Intelligence Community Inspector General—Who We Are*, 2020). OGC attorneys represent entities on issues related to Title 18 and other legal aspects related to national security law. Additionally, the ODNI's "Intelligence Community Legal Reference Book" (2020) lists at least 42 additional federal laws, regulations, guidelines, and policy memorandums governing all or part of IC programmatic responsibilities. As noted in other sections, state and local ordinances also govern aspects of the IC entities physically located in those areas.

Ombudsman. Intelligence agencies include an office of the ombudsman as a neutral arbiter for investigations, complaints, and conflict resolution. The ombudsman fields questions and complaints from employees, whistleblowers, and customers when those issues do not normally fall within the normal redress procedures governed by one of the other compliance actors. They also coach employees on problem resolution and partner with HR in mediating disputes. Therefore, while they partner with others actors in Compliance, they function as neutral arbiters and function within strict confidentiality rules (*Position Announcement—ODNI Ombudsman*, 2017).

The office of the ombudsman has no designated statutory authority. This lack of legal mandate is significant because no law requires that IC entities have an office of the ombudsman or staff them at minimum levels. However, they play critical roles in streamlining and managing disputes so that they are resolved outside of litigation and formal redress. A 2016 study found that ombudsmen across the federal government had quantifiable impacts on reducing legal costs and improving organizational morale (Houk et al., 2016).

I have placed the collective actors within IC offices of ombudsmen in Compliance Five because they partner in constructing the discourse. Additionally, actors within other Compliance Five collectives who I interviewed for this study considered the ombudsman as partners:

> In the IC agency, most of them have an ombuds [ombudsman] that an employee can go to. They also have the EO office, the IG. (Kate)

> The only organization, and it's not really an organization, usually it's two or three people, no matter how big the agency, the only organization that didn't serve the agency [over the employee] was the ombudsman. (Chris)

While they are aligned with separate statutory mandates, the social worlds function as partners in the Compliance Five Social World. For example, OGC offices within the IC offer opportunities for positions that one might expect to find within a law firm, such as staff attorneys, paralegals, and law clerks. However, they also include auditors and EEO investigators, creating intra-field boundary objects with IG and EEO offices, respectively (*Legal Careers in the IC Flyer*, 2020). Additionally, non-IC entities, such as the Government Accountability Office, partner with the U.S. Congress to perform independent monitoring functions for IC entity against specified goals; these activities also act as boundary objects with the U.S. Legislative Branch and broader federal government (GAO, 2020; *U.S. GAO—About GAO*, 2021).

Complaints as Arenas and Boundaries. I will use *complaints* as a term to represent a generalized set of processes in relation to formal grievances and informal requests for assistance in toxic events. Complaints symbolize a threat to power structures within Compliance Five because they inhibit efforts to protect IC entities. Thus, the “Complaint Process” forms a negotiated arena where parties assert competing equities for redress. The complaints, themselves, function as boundary objects between Compliance Five, Archetype, and Core as basic social processes that address interacting, but conflicting, needs for each party in the arena (Star & Griesemer, 1989).

Grievances are generally defined as formal claims by an employee that they have experienced adverse impacts by an organization’s policy or action (SHRM, 2019), which are

typically related to performance or the inability to perform designated duties. However, employees may also grieve harassment and other adverse behaviors by coworkers as representatives of those organizations (NoFEAR Act, 2002). Compliance Five also has equity in informal complaints that do not result in formal grievances because they support the micro-mission of that social world: avoid litigation and protect the entity. In this way, the complaint process, to include both formal grievances and informal complaints, functions as a contested arena when one or more parties brings (or threatens to bring) legal action. Within the arena, the complainant seeks a satisfactory resolution. For Compliance Five, the goal is to negotiate a solution outside of the legal process:

> Being a partner to the degree that you can partner with different dimensions of the Office of General Counsel . . . we can't be a partner with the litigating branch because there would be a conflict of interest of when we're in partnership with those five. [Within] the HR function, we can creatively design solutions to employee concern. (Vickie)

A general explanation of procedures confronting IC personnel when considering a grievance is necessary to understand the situation constitutive of response to TWB. When employees file grievances related to TWB or other counterproductive workplace behaviors, they might approach any of the collectives within the Compliance Five depending on their own understandings of the jurisdictions for those organizations. Each has their own set of investigatory procedures based on statute and/or agency policy. Grievance standards, guidelines, and procedures are posted on unclassified entity websites (e.g. DIA, 2020; CIA *Equal Employment Opportunity,* 2020). However, a critical assumption built into this segmented authority is that intelligence officers understand the various micro-missions sufficiently to know how to seek assistance and from whom:

> I finally went to the IG, and I went to EEO. When I still got no relief and when an attorney is telling me like some craziness, and the commander's basically, "Go fuck yourself." I mean, that was the worst of the worst where I just didn't know what to do. (Eve)

Grievance procedures vary according to statutory and regulatory authority for the redress arm, as well as entity policy. By way of example, an intelligence officer filing an EEO

complaint will be assigned a counselor, who determines whether the infractions fall within the confines of EEO's statutory mandates. If they do not fit within EEO's purview, the EEO counselor will refer that individual to the appropriate office. The individual might be offered counseling, mediation, or another tailored solution falling under the umbrella of an alternative dispute resolution (ADR; *Employee Rights & Appeals*, 2021). Employees must contact EEO within 45 days of the last infraction. However, the EEO counselor must provide the employee with permission to file a complaint, after which the employee must file within 15 days (*Overview of Federal Sector EEEO Complaint Process*, 2021).

The alignment between statutory authority as a system of knowledge (and therefore, power) creates a complex duality of clarity and opaque confinement. Legal clarity binds the Compliance Five to the intent and letter of law, which the ODNI's Director of EEO addressed in her HPSCI testimony:

> The majority of EEOD cases go against the complainant because the burden of proof is on the complainant, and the standard is high. Early conflict resolution and intervention is critical. Trials take long and just lets it fester. So, we focus on prevention. (Sampson, 2019)

This rigid compliance framework elevates the important or alternative processes:

> Once in a while, the evidence was there. If anywhere along the process my staff thought that there was such evidence, we would reach out to general counsel and to management to attempt to resolve the situation. (Lisa)

Functions in practice may emerge into arenas of negotiation (Strauss, 1978, 1982) when multiple organizations have segments of responsibility; these contested arenas may emerge even when they share a goal to identify a solution at the lowest threshold. Complaints threaten power structures within Compliance Five because they inhibit efforts to protect IC entities. The complaint process, which includes lodging, informing, preparing, and negotiating a solution to a complaint, forms a negotiated arena where parties assert competing equities for redress.

The actual complaints form boundary objects (Star & Griesemer, 1989) between the Compliance Five and the Core when grievances impact the core mission. They junction with the

Archetype as threats to culture-shaping or standard-setting discourses. In this role, complaints challenge equities and roles within the arenas. As discussed, the primary actors governed by the Core are analysts, operations personnel, and those with supervisory responsibility. However, managers and senior leaders normally associated with the Archetype function within Core discourses and repertoires when supporting the core mission. In this manner, actors normally functioning within the Archetype can adopt Core equities in the arena. Actors within Compliance Five may also be seniors who set standards and take ownership of culture shaping in their collectives as part of the Archetype.

The complexities and obstacles built into systems of redress are significant and best understood through the experiences reported by participants in the grounded theory portion of the study. Ten of the 20 participants reported that they either contacted, or considered contacting, one or more of the Compliance Five during their experiences with TWB. Which office they contacted depended upon what they perceived to be the fundamental origins of the behavior and where they thought they would likely receive the best result. Each reported a lack of success. For example, as of this writing, Mike (2020) continues to work with EEO on charges of discriminatory behavior. Eve (2020) approached HR, IG, and EEO at different junctures. Loess (2020) contacted the IG at his entity in response to a senior leader and her allies, who he believed were filing false security infractions to target him. The senior official in Loess's case was eventually reposted to another IC entity. However, he perceived that his interactions with the IG were more resistant than collaborative:

> I did go to the IG to raise the issue. I did not get a confidence-building reply by them because they were asking me if I felt physically threatened, or was the person trying to physically coerce me when the executive is probably half of my size and from another gender. I am essentially an ex-football jock from many, many decades ago. It was almost absurd. I didn't feel threatened by this individual physically, which to me seemed like the IG's office just didn't want to pursue it. (Loess)

Analysis of data collected for this study indicates that Loess's perception has merit and reflected within a primary Compliance Social World repertoire: "I Work for the Agency."

I Work for the Agency as Repertoire. As a discursive message, “I Work for the Agency” represents a collective identity around a mission to shield the organization. The following passages from three interviews with actors associated with Compliance Five frame the message:

> *Interviewer:* If I were to ask you, “Who does your office represent, the employees or the agency?” what would you say?
>
> The agency. (Kate)
>
> I am not there to advocate on behalf of the EO complainant. (Lisa)
>
> I was a director of HR. I was told on numerous occasions, "You serve the organization, not the people." (Chris)

The agency takes on a persona as something, or a collective someone, to be cared for and shielded. The threat is litigation:

> They are in place to meet legal regulations, or legal requirements, and to reduce risk on the part of the agency. I do have a responsibility to give employees guidance on how they can be the most productive, and make the greatest contribution, but at the end of the day, my job is to advise management in a way that they reduce risk to the agency. (Kate)

The segmented statutory limitations within the discursive field are nonhuman actants that place boundaries on who they can assistant and how. An aggrieved party who believes TWB is related to some form of bias may perceive that their circumstances are unique. However, that uniqueness may bar them from receiving a resolution unless those circumstances fit a proscribed set of parameters and/or the aggrieved party can be assigned to a protected class:

> The first thing that happens is, if you're saying that you feel you have been discriminated against, what makes you feel like you have been and then we take a look at the categories that apply because not all of them do, you know? I am in a bit of an awkward position because later down the road in the process, I have an adjudication type of role. And so, this is an example where it might've been a little bit frustrating for someone to come into my office and tell me all their woes, and then I say, "I'm going to now take you to another office here. My staff officer is going to do an intake. Well, here, tell your story again to my director of complaints," who is an absolute expert in the process, but, right there, you've had a little bit of a “runaround.”. And, why is that? Because I have to stay as impartial on the specific complaint as possible. (Lisa)

In this way, interests between the employee and Compliance Five actors diverge along equities and perceived roles.

In Chapter 3, I explored the way in which situational analysis uses Foucault's theories on discourse as a reflection of power in the situation as a root metaphor (Clarke, 2005). Within this framework, structures along with what is said about them, what discourse says versus what actors do, and the roles of nonhuman elements also construct a tableau of power through what is known and who knows it. I could identify no documentary evidence to reflect this bifurcation of agency versus employee interests. Rather, the agency and IC-wide-level discourse encourages a veneer of obligatory kinship with employees toward identifying and addressing TWB and other forms of counterproductive behavior:

> If you witness harassment or discrimination, you must act by stopping it or reporting the behavior immediately to your supervisor or EEO representative. In both situations, you have my assurance that I and my senior leadership team will not tolerate any acts of reprisal. We will hold all managers accountable for living by and promoting our zero-tolerance policy (*Zero Tolerance of Harassment and Discrimination at CIA*, 2018).

> We insist that all managers uphold their responsibility to prevent harassment and discrimination and model a culture of civility and professionalism. This, then, extends it to everyone (Coats et al., 2019).

To protect the organization from litigation, the aggrieved must either face fewer incentives to sue or be given useful alternatives. They must also understand the system. However, as the previous section outlined, half of the grounded theory participants sought assistance from Compliance Five and received a different response than what they expected:

> That's a real interesting distinction because everyone thinks that when they go to EO. Yes, our overall arching purpose in life is to try to prevent discrimination, through fostering diversity and inclusion methods, and also to conduct the EO complaints process when discrimination has allegedly occurred. But it is not to be an advocate in a complainant's particular situation. It's not an advocacy role, per se. And so, that's something that's hard for employees to understand and leaves them believing that we don't care about them. (Lisa)

This incongruence between what personnel expect and what Compliance Five can provide creates another situational element around trust. Trust may be a nonhuman actant as an atmospheric, but one that takes on an expressly human form. This impact to trust may be

worsened by the operational effort required to maneuver around regulatory barriers and steps built into social World structures:

> When someone comes to me and asks for advice on whether or not they should go formal with something, whether formal be a grievance, an appeal, an EO complaint, an IG complaint, what I always lay out for people is, first thing I ask is if they have the energy for the process. (Kate)

The complexity of structures, processes, and rules functioning as a counterweight against a positive resolution for the aggrieved are carried along by something else skirting under the discourse: reputational branding from deciding to file:

> Someone has filed a complaint, so they've caused management problems, and now they're labeled as one of those EO people, right? We don't respect the process enough. We don't respect the process enough to give it validity and value, and so, we criticize anyone who goes through it. (Lisa)

This fear of being "branded" factored into the decisions by some grounded theory participants not to file a formal complaint when subjected by TWB:

> I should have walked over to the EEO office and filed. I likely would have been successful. But it creates a culture of fear, and everybody feels it just a little bit. I knew that if I filed, everybody in my leadership chain, including the person, would know that I did it. I believe the person would have gotten, at a minimum, probably some form of disciplinary action for the behavior. But, whether I could have a career with any potential I feel would be really different, because one of the things, at least in our agency, it's really small and bad news travels faster than good news does. So, I think my career would have been over with advancement opportunities. Even if I still had a job, I wouldn't have been able to do anything. (Gwen)

A previous section outlined laws and regulations governing responsibilities for monitoring, tracking, and reporting progress against anti-harassment and discrimination goals. Thus, structures within Compliance Five require a collaboration with those who observe, have knowledge of, or have been targeted by covered events. Simply, individuals must be willing to comply with management directives to report. However, I argue that the rigid boundaries between shielding the agency and protecting the employee inhibit the ability of Compliance Five structures to function effectively. The ODNI's Director of EEO, Rita Sampson (2019) acknowledged the point of irony in her testimony to the HPSCI: "Underreporting is a challenge.

We address them when we know. Sometimes, it's not popular. Workforce confidence rides on it".

Therefore, while complaints form boundary objects, that junction may not be positively functional unless supported by efforts to eliminate the barrier in favor of the potential litigant:

> If we can shape the organizational culture, during period of time, where we're trying to resolve the complaint and advise the person that their rights and remedies, if we can take this initial contact and really use that to help people understand the various optics of both the person who's aggrieved and the person that is causing the perceived conflict, then I think that's where the real value outside of the formal filing the complaint with the state, the questionnaires and whatnot. (Vickie)

Vickie is rhetorically assigning herself an advocacy role in alignment with the covenant relationship that stewardship theorists argue is necessary to build trust (Caldwell et al., 2008; Caldwell & Karri, 2005). By reaching into the arena in which cultures are shaped, she is also adopting the culture shaping repertoire of Archetype. This interaction between Compliance Five and Archetype join at the focus on managerial training (*Joint Strategy to Advance Equal Employment Opportunity, Diversity, and Inclusion within the United States Intelligence Community 2020–2023*, 2020) and empowerment (Van Sloun, 2020) as the most effective way to impact the workforce and create boundaries with the Core.

Organizational change theorists Stacey (2001) and D. P. Shaw (2002) argued that driving change is partially reactive to external forces in a constant state of flux. D. P. Shaw (2002) furthered that large, complex environments (such as the IC) remove control from so-called change agents and relegate them to participants rather than drivers. This complexity relegates culture change in the IC as unpredictable in outcome and timing, leaving some actors taking a different approach to stewardship in ways that allow them to cross between social worlds, discourses, and repertoires. This concept emerged in a site of dissent discussed in the next section.

Site of Dissent—Leave, Don't File. In their model of emergent leadership, Fairhurst and Zoller (2010) argued that dissent is a form of leadership through resistance. They based

this model on a case analysis by Graham (1995) who studied control transitions from managers to teams in an Indiana Subaru-Isuzu plant. When workers noticed contradictions between vision and practice (Argyris & Schon, 1974), as well as cultural incongruities between what management wanted from them and what they were accustomed to, they began dissenting overtly but also taking up small acts of resistance. The workers essentially acted out Foucault's (1990) micro-politics as forms of power in practice.

Dissent in this framework extends beyond Strauss's (1978) definition of "authenticity" as related to how one fit within a social world. Dissent is outright rebellion against the discursive norm. To reflect this action, I have termed a *site of dissent* as a framework in which primary actors actively rebel against the dominant discourse constructed by their social world. Compliance Five included a single site of dissent referred to here as "Leave, Don't File" in which actors advocated that complainants avoid playing in the complaints process arena.

> So, if I were to be giving a friend or one of my children advice, it would be to not file, but leave. (Kate)

> I don't steer them anywhere even if I knew the next place to go was either the ombudsman, HR, general counsel, or the inspector general. I know for a fact that four out of those five offices don't work for you. They work for the agency. That's factual. (Chris)

Obligation as discourse includes processes, structures, and rules designed to ensure that, like a Las Vega casino, the "house wins." In this form, dissent functions beyond emotional scaffolding as a mechanism to leverage empathetic support for a better solution (Fairhurst & Zoller, 2010). Rather, "Leave, Don't File" extends that strategic empathy into a form of emotional subterfuge to shield IC personnel from an arena in which they face inherent disadvantages:

> This is just my own cynicism; it might have so many steps and processes to discourage people from using it. (Kate)

In the words of one grounded theory participant:

> We have this burden of trying to describe or articulate a whole sort of institutionalized way of life that's not geared towards us. I just kind of feels like the whole agency . . . for us, like we're trying to buy into a construct that wasn't even meant for us is what I'm trying to say. If that makes sense? (Kit)

Unlike ADR, which is designed to find a solution that satisfies the complainant outside of litigation that harms the entity, “Leave, Don’t File” is turning the shield around to protect the complainant from the legal and regulatory frameworks designed to protect the institution.

Chapter 4 explored the passive nature of TWB in the IC, which consists of subtle and covert behaviors that emerge longitudinally. In fact, when asked for her definition of TWB, one senior actor within Compliance Five defined a solely passive dynamic:

> I think it is conduct or nonverbal cues, because I think there's a larger dimension of not just what is done or said, but how people [engage in] physical positioning. Or two, a signal to a person that they should not feel safe in that space, that they have to be on guard, that they are certainly not viewed with a highest esteem, and that there will be consequences based on the offender's behavior or thoughts or vantage point in relation to that other person. (Vickie)

However, Vickie was describing a dynamic in which, if she were a victim, the institutional frameworks within her own social would likely be unable to provide her with a remedy because she would be relegated to relying on a system of evidence designed not to acknowledge what it could not prove:

> It's all about compiling the evidence that supports your allegation. (Kate)

> They would struggle. It was almost like they saw it as a foregone conclusion, but they didn't give us a lot of evidence. (Chris)

“Leave, Don’t File” exists as a pocket of resistance within the “grievance” arena in which dissent imposes conditions on the institution’s imperative control (Weber, 1968). Thus, dissent emerges into discursive positioning as a framework for micro-leadership in which a social world’s actors reject this imperative institutional control to shield the institution in favor of a holding onto a values framework centering on what it means to be human. A choice designed to shield others is also reflective of the *Holding Self* processes identified in Chapter 4 as being critical to responding to TWB effectively.

Summary

This chapter has attempted to understand the situation constitutive of how and why intelligence officers respond to TWB in different ways. I have restricted the analysis to those discourses, discursive repertoires, arenas for action, processes, and actors central to my research question. Therefore, many situational elements that would be of great interest to understand in the IC were not reflected here because they did not emerge in the data as instrumental to the phenomenon.

While primary actors construct the discourse in a social world, the boundaries are primarily discursive rather than structural—meaning, membership is defined by speaking the "language" of the discourse rather than organizational wiring diagrams. Three primary social worlds align with three power frameworks related to the question. The Core reflects relationally ambiguous micro-politics surrounding the core mission and an outward focus on organizational frameworks for action. The Archetype shapes the culture and standards to bound the core mission into an ideal for what it means to be a U.S. intelligence officer. The ideal may or may not reflect micro-cultures within the Core. The Compliance Five establishes the legal and regulatory guardrails that enable institutional order within a core value that managers are the key. However, these enabling structures available within Compliance Five also inhibit meaningful action to confront TWB because, in the IC, the behavior typically falls into interpretive gaps not covered by these structures.

Although situational analysis attempts to decenter personal meaning in favor of understanding broader institutional, symbolic, and processual elements, the research inevitably flows back into that personal space because the research question relates to a human dynamic of abusive power. For example, complaints related to toxic events form the boundary between the three social worlds; however, complaints are human pleas for help in structural form. The complaint process stages an arena in which a chorus of discursive repertoires emerge; however, these repertoires reflect human prerogatives, even if collectively. Consequently, this

situational analysis segment reflects the collective action as the sum total of competing levels of personal meaning in relation to how and why intelligence officers respond to TWB in different ways.

The next chapter concludes with a discussion of the study's findings. This analysis includes a section that offers added coherence to the discursive disconnects and contradictions between the three social worlds that emerged in this chapter. The chapter centers the discussion on a theoretical model of response to TWB among intelligence officers in the IC. The model serves as a framework for future empirical research. Following the explanation of the model, I present propositions to guide future areas of exploration. I conclude with a brief discussion on implications for leading responses to TWB in the IC.

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study examined how intelligence officers respond to toxic workplace behavior (TWB) in different ways, the sociopsychological reasons for those responses, and how responses operationalize into the mission. Segment 1 of the study used qualitative data from 20 interviews with current and former intelligence officers, and grounded theory methodology to explore experiences with TWB and their impacts. The primary focus was the longitudinal trajectory of conditions and responses. Segment 2 used extant data and supplemental interviews with social world actors to map the intelligence situation relevant to response. The outcome was a theoretical model of operationalized response that will serve as an empirical foundation for future research.

The model to be discussed in this chapter is complex. The 18 entities within the Intelligence Community (IC) are a web of micro- and meso-cultures, which contribute to a macro-environment that would be challenging enough to understand if the working environment were relatively static. However, the IC is in a constant state of flux as structures, goals, and requirements shift along with world events. This state of flux is by design and by default. However, this shifting environment is grounded by the humanity of those who work there. Although the analysts and operations personnel in this study functioned under unique work circumstances and had specialized skills, the data showed that they were vulnerable to the same reactions to toxic power identified in studies of TWB in other critical mission environments. As intelligence officers, they may have been extraordinary. As people, they were ordinarily human.

This chapter reviews the theoretical model of response within a graduated structure. The first section reviews the elements of the model constructed from the grounded theory segment. I briefly review the six primary dimensions and two inter-dimensions, along with their conditions and consequences. In the section to follow, I examine the situational elements relevant to the research question and explore how the personal meaning and situation interact. Then, I discuss

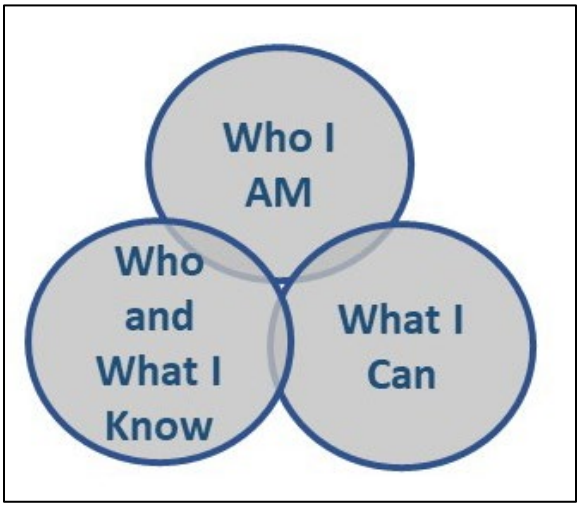
five propositions based on the study's findings. Because the findings have significant impacts to intelligence practice but also have complex relationships, I decided to include future research possibilities within each proposition section rather than in a separate section, as is common. A section on implications for leading change follows before concluding with a brief discussion on areas for limitations and future research.

The Pathway Model of Holding Self

Toxic behavior is a systemic phenomenon that manifests itself in human behavior centering on counterproductive expressions of power (Kusy & Holloway, 2009; Padilla et al., 2007). This study is the first identified effort to understand how intelligence officers respond to TWB. The study found that TWB in the intelligence context challenged self-concepts so that responses became reflexive efforts to hold "self." *Holding Self* became individualized within personalities, and the significance of and longitudinal ambiguities around relationships, status, and organizational dynamics. Responses were inconsistent and emergent within eight dimensions. Further, *Holding Self* became a series of strategies and tactics to maneuver in the pathways between divergent social world discursive repertoires. Subsequent sections will describe and explain the *Pathway Model of Holding Self.*

Figure 6.1

Primary Psychological Dimensions of Holding Self



Primary Psychological Dimensions

As illustrated by Figure 6.1, three primary psychological dimensions were platforms for the cognitive work around preserving self-concepts. "Who I Am" represented naming and claiming the "self" (S. D. Rose, 2002) as activated within what they believed they were, how they believed others saw them, and personal values as guardrails on response. "Who and What I Know" was a

mechanism to assess the power of mentors and relational networks as support systems for how to respond. “What I Can” reflected their perceptions of agency—the power they believed that they had to affect their own environments.

The three primary psychological dimensions functioned as frameworks for imagining possibilities. Intelligence officers relayed stories of imagining how responses might impact self-concepts. Imagined risks spiraled into games of “what if . . .” and whether the job was “worth it.” The imagining processes included reflecting on how early mentors helped build self-concepts and provided valuable lessons they would later draw upon during toxic events. Broader networks provided a place to transition as they imagined leaving the toxic environment. Agentic power and “self” were inextricably linked in that their value in the environment was at least partially tied to what they could do for themselves—and *to*—others.

The identification processes within the psychological dimensions functioned as grounding assessments for gains, losses, and risk. Additionally, responses evolved as toxic events continued and as pasts folded into *Holding Self* processes under subsequent toxic experiences. The cognitive work of these dimensions was no guarantee of a preferred outcome. When outcomes emerged from ineffective responses, self-concepts, support structures, and personal values as critical elements misaligned.

Primary Action Dimensions

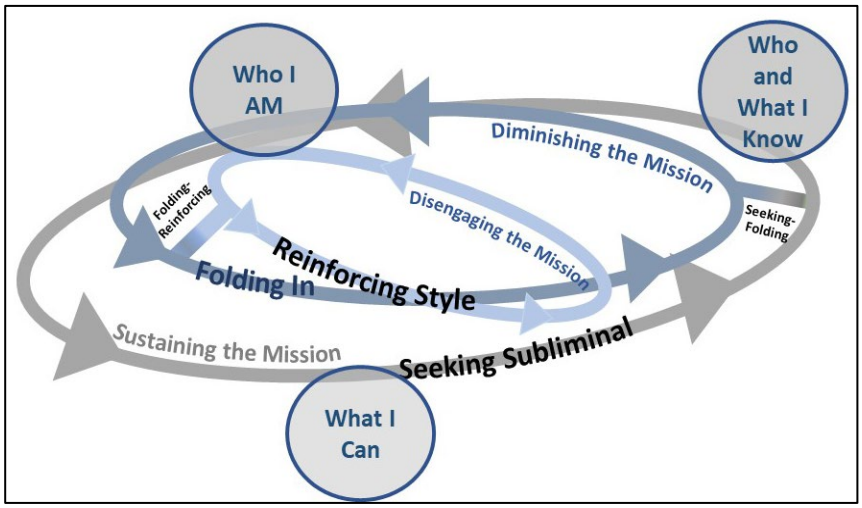
In Figure 6.2, the three grey circles represent the three primary psychological dimensions. The three intersecting rings represent the primary action dimensions. The arrows represent continual movement as these dimensions became seed beds for choices for intelligence officers to consider a range of responses to express hold “self” within the toxic environment. In this way, these dimensions functioned as continual loops in which they acted, reacted, and adjusted in interaction with the psychological dimensions. Two inter-dimensions as junctions between the primary dimensions functioned as interchanges for moving into more

favorable response trajectories or receding into less favorable ones. The consequences to the mission for each dimension are represented inside of each ring.

"Seeking subliminal" sustained the mission by enabling the intelligence officer to adapt and maneuver so that they could simultaneously hold onto self-concepts and fully support mission requirements. The dimension emerged as an ideal state of opposites because an awareness of and commitment to personal values coexisted with a cunning use of acumen and agency. Intelligence officers in this dimension did not project values onto the external environment. When the organizational values misaligned with theirs, participants made choices that enabled them to hold onto self-concepts. Careers, coworkers, and organizations were tangential and expendable.

Figure 6.2

Primary Psychological and Action Dimensions of Holding Self



"Seeking Subliminal" emerged differently among participants. For example, Ben elevated values for what he would tolerate in the workplace but maneuvered to ensure those choices into his work. Aedan elevated ongoing efforts to redirect himself and others but within a process designed around one value: the mission. The result was a scaffold for response in which participants shielded self-concepts either by maneuvering around the behavior or leveraging it to the participant's advantage. Within these choices, *Holding Self* sought the subliminal in the form of what worked rather than within a preexisting set of expectations for others in the environment. This divestiture translated into outcomes that sustained the mission.

"Folding in" diminished the mission because the withdrawal processes intelligence officers engaged in to hold onto self-concepts reduced their support to the mission, albeit in sporadic measure. Separation defined the dimension—from teammates, supervisors, colleagues, and redress—as they sought to shield themselves from the toxic environment. Gwen (2020) described the intelligence "space" as a web of small towns, where everyone knows everyone and everything about everyone. Fear over lost reputations and careers represented heavily in the dimension. Research indicates that emotional distress elevates focus on short-term gratification and dampens forethought (Tice et al., 2001). Therefore, this dimension revolved around minimizing interactions with the toxic personality and withdrawal from collaboration. They also refrained from engaging help because wider networks risked betrayal or embarrassment. Seeking institutional help through redress procedures risked being "labeled as one of those EO [equal employment opportunity] people" (Lisa). If they sought help from redress offices within the Compliance Five social world, they interpreted the rigid structures and evidentiary procedures as another toxic layer.

Intelligence officers in the "Folding In" dimension were physically present but not fully engaged in the intelligence dialogue. As Chapter 5 discussed, the "situational peer" repertoire problematized identifying the focal point for influence due to a relationally ambiguous operating framework. As team members, intelligence officers are embedded in an intact social group within a larger social system (Cohen & Bailey, 1997). Thus, experiences with the toxic environment surrounding one set of team members penetrated relational boundaries in the fluid collaborative space so that they also folded in on distal networks and relationships.

Finally, "Reinforcing Style" disengaged the mission because efforts to impose the "self" on an increasingly unreceptive toxic environment overwhelmed time, attention, and energy available to support the mission. As with the "Seeking Subliminal" dimension, values played a significant role. However, participants in "Seeking Subliminal" showed heightened levels of adaptability and used values as mechanisms to ground those choices within a set of limits on

their own behavior. Intelligence officers in “Reinforcing Style” believed “fixing” the toxic environment was their responsibility. Maneuverability was tantamount to capitulation and an acceptance of organizational norms they perceived as antithetical to what was right. Imposing one’s will on an unreceptive environment depletes energy and emotional resources (Baumeister et al., 1998; Baumeister et al., 2000), which distracts from performance by redirecting attention toward individuals and away from outcomes (Simons & Peterson, 2000). Therefore, reinforcing one’s style on the toxic environment confined participants to one, unproductive course that, for many, placed them on a path to declines in physical and psychological health.

Rather than an object, Foucault (1972, 1977, 2002) theorized power as a set of tacit processes that confine both ruler and subjects, alike, in a form of “gaze” that impacted them even when the source of power was not visible. His interest was not in how individuals amassed power; he was interested in how they became subjugated to it. He rejected the idea that discourse conveyed meaning. However, in a lean toward the constructivist underpinnings of this dissertation, he argued that discourse conveyed systems of power that the ruler and subjects interpreted as meaningful.

I argue that Foucault’s theory was relevant to responses surrounding TWB, albeit with an important nuance. If one extends his argument about interpretation and meaning to how intelligence officers respond to TWB, then the source of the “gaze” emerged as a question within the dimensions. Within “Folding In,” the micro-power of the toxic personality, the institutional power of redress procedures, alienation from external networks, and relational complexities subjugated intelligence officers by minimizing them into a professional stasis. By comparison, the inherent power that self-concepts in “Reinforcing Style” afforded to intelligence officers as they confronted TWB also became a form of subjugation when the “self” could not be paired with organizational acumen and agency. Alternatively, intelligence officers within “Seeking Subliminal” only subjugated themselves to the gaze of self-concepts, personal values, acumen, and agency. This confluence made playthings out of organizational impediments and

toxic personalities when they challenged *Holding Self* processes. In this way, “Seeking Subliminal” was subjugation to trajectory of response patterns but to an internal eye.

The Situation

The intelligence officers in this study were primarily within a singular social world (Strauss, 1978) bound together by a shared culture and discourse. Social worlds connect, collide, and diverge, particularly in a fluctuating macro-environment. In this way, social worlds become sites of action but also control (Shibutani, 1986, 1987). Arenas of negotiation and tension join social worlds and constitute the situation (Clarke, 2005). As discussed, this analysis of the situation is narrowly confined to the research question rather than a generalized view of the IC social environment.

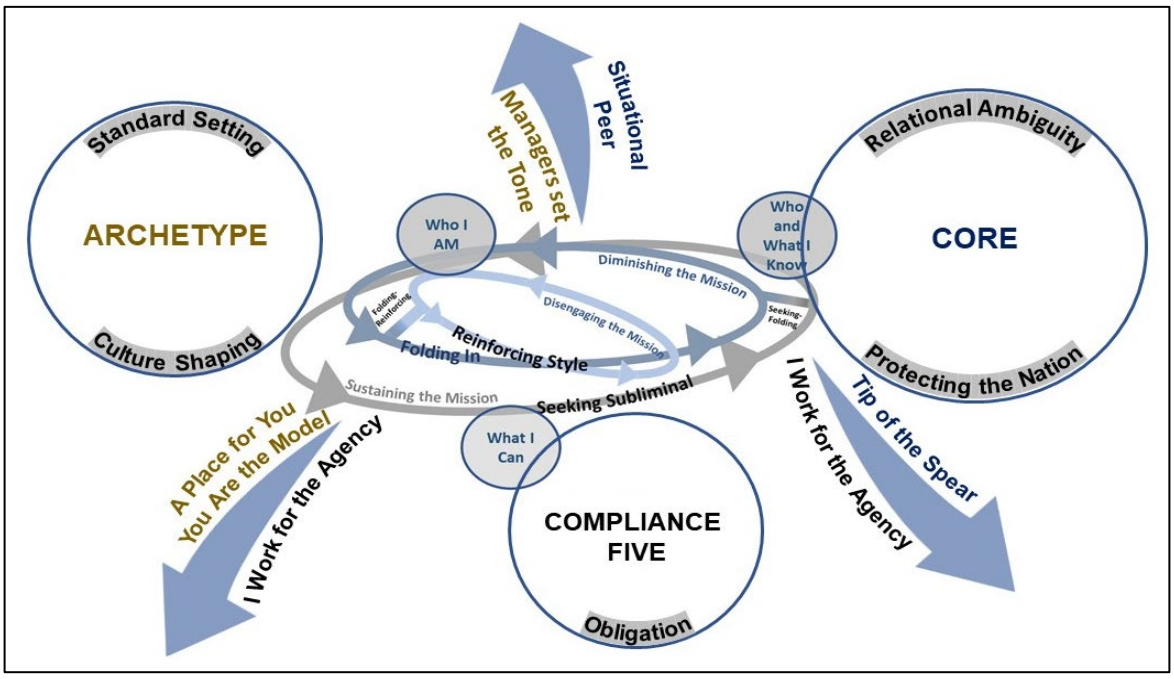
This approach intensified the focus onto three primary social worlds impacting *Holding Self* processes and represented in Figure 6.3. In the figure, the three white circles represent the relevant social worlds. The intersecting rings depicting dimensions of response placed between the social worlds represent the situation that intelligence offers must navigate as they choose how to respond. The blue arrows represent the gaps between contradictory discursive repertoires (discussed below) that complicate these choices. Thus, the ability of intelligence officers to maneuver between the three worlds and competing repertoires while sustaining self-concepts influenced how they responded to TWB.

The Core. The Core is a social space for the analysts and operations personnel central to this study. The Core is iconic through pop culture and former intelligence officers peddling their experiences. Social worlds construct discursive repertoires to convey messages (King, 2007). Repertoires framed heroism within relational ambiguities, and preoccupations over institutions and “leadership” as the focal points for the origins and solutions behind TWB. In the

Core, responding to TWB became a simultaneous commitment to *Holding Self* and flexibility in both function and goals.

Figure 6.3

Pathway Model of Holding Self Amid TWB



The Archetype. The Archetype was a social space for senior leaders and other actors who promoted the ideal intelligence officer. While the Core was more integral to the core mission, the Archetype seeded the field by shaping the cultural ideal. While the Core communicated internally, the Archetype delivered repertoires internally and externally. These repertoires were invitations to join the Archetype model and a commitment that one would be valued upon arrival. *Holding Self* processes to respond to TWB threatened one's authenticity within the Archetype ideal (Strauss, 1978) and one's right to function (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) at the "tip of the spear."

Standard-shaping formed a separate, but complementary, discursive field. This discourse structured norms aligned with the ideal, established boundaries, and assigned managers as the focal point for action to support the Archetype model. Thus, while the

Archetype model shaped the image of the intelligence officer; standards set the boundaries on how far one could stray from that ideal. They also established a promise of effective redress to hold accountable those who strayed from model.

Compliance Five. The Compliance Five constituted the most compact social world because its five micro-worlds and discursive field around legal and regulatory obligation were distinct. Structures and pathways for redress represented forms of power. Even messaging occurred within a singular repertoire: “I Work for the Agency.” Actors external to the Compliance Five became implicated as collaborators through standard-setting (Archetype) or problems to solve (Core).

“I Work for the Agency” became a rhetorical drumbeat during data collection. However, legitimacy in this social world required established training, education, and certification so that belonging there was more than a repertoire. Legitimization emerged within the formal complaints-filing process as an arena and complaints, themselves, as boundary objects. Additionally, the discourse was constructed around a set of provable behaviors and defined remedies only partially relevant to the taxonomy of behaviors intelligence officers described. Therefore, *Holding Self* amid TWB when interacting with this social world required that intelligence officers bound expectations around possibilities rather than need.

Divergence and Contradiction. I chose King's (2007) discursive repertoires as a framework to analyze the IC situation relevant to responses to TWB because I began to detect divergent and contradictory messages between the social worlds. The social worlds implicated each other through cross-world references that developed organically within each but that shared meaning (Maag Merki et al., 2020). As symbols for value through language (Milliken & Schreiber, 2012), these references betrayed levels of subjugation to each other to achieve goals but in ways that also revealed reportorial contradictions that complicated those linkages. Effective response required that intelligence officers maneuver in the pathways between these contradictions.

Referring again to Figure 6.3, within the Core, “Situational Peer” made rank ambiguous among intelligence officers and an element of relational significance that defined whether behavior was toxic. This repertoire diverged from the Archetype’s “Managers Set the Tone” and its hierarchical focal point. Simply, intelligence officers did not perceive that managers set the tone when more relationally significant toxic personalities with referential status stood between the target and the manager, or when ambiguous peer/status relationships upended the clarity of hierarchy.

Similarly, the Core’s repertoire of “Tip of the Spear” in which the mission subordinated the institution, diverged from the Compliance Five’s single repertoire of “I Work for the Agency,” in which the institution was central. Zeke’s (2020) warning of “epic failure” if TWB was not addressed placed the behavior directly in the mission path. However, redress procedures framed around obligations to protect the agency and not the intelligence officer carrying the spear created a contradiction between the two repertoires. By extension, the Archetype’s “A Place for You” and “You are the Model” repertoires were affirming and people-centric messages, but that also diverged from the institutional focal point of “I Work for the Agency.”

Responses to and solutions for TWB also diverged. The Archetype discourse around shaping cultures and setting standards were directed at fixing *other* social worlds. In this way, the middle manager-focus for the Archetype seemed disconnected from the Core’s implication of senior leaders and institutions as central to the dilemma. Thus, the Core represented managers as mere conduits for senior leader values frameworks. To “fix” the managers, the IC first need to remodel senior leadership:

> You start asking a lot of leadership questions [in climate surveys], [which say] they don't like who they work for. That's not actually true. They don't like the levels above that. (Gwen)

Summary

Divergent and contradictory messaging frameworks raised significant implications for effective responses to TWB. The constellation of psychological and action dimensions, along

with the two inter-dimensions facilitating movement between them function within these contradictions. Intelligence officers had to maneuver along pathways between the social worlds as they deciphered a web of compliance procedures not designed for them, while finding a way to fit an archetypical model of legitimacy that did not denigrate self-concepts. Embankments of unproductive choices formed either side of each pathway. Therefore, the effectiveness of response depended upon how nimbly they maneuvered in the breach.

Theoretical Propositions

This section will discuss five propositions to guide future research, which center on findings that informed the model for how intelligence officers respond to TWB and the sociopsychological underpinnings the variations in those responses. The model reflects delineations between responses that sustain, diminish, and disengage support for the mission. The study showed that responding effectively to TWB relied upon understanding, leveraging, and remaining on pathways that navigate three social worlds. Thus, the propositions are foundations to design generalizable solutions. Because each proposition raises questions related to intelligence as a practice, I have chosen to integrate possibilities for future research into the discussion for each proposition rather than consolidate them into a separate section:

> ***Proposition 1: Passive forms of TWB are more prevalent in the IC than overt bullying and abusive behaviors, which challenges the effectiveness of legal and regulatory mechanisms designed to address more transparent, less interpretive behaviors.***

In his definition of workplace aggression, Beugre (1998) distinguished between overt aggression and more passive forms as distinctions in form but not in impact. This study validated those comparisons, most vividly in the core conditions of *Holding Self* in which intelligence officers described the effects of TWB through metaphors of physical assault. More interpretive forms of TWB are simply more easily dismissed and harder to address (Holloway & Kusy, 2010).

The theoretical model in this study provides an opportunity to understand the nature of toxic experiences in the IC. Intelligence officers in the study validated research on the destructiveness of passive forms of TWB to targets, witnesses, and learners, as well as the presence of systemic actors and enablers that facilitate the behavior over time. As identified in prior research, passive TWB was related to withdrawal, misdirected attention, and loss of valued personnel (Cortina et al., 2001; Kusy & Holloway, 2009; Padilla et al., 2007; Pearson & Porath, 2005; R. A. Taylor & Taylor, 2017, 2018). However, this study cultivated new ground in rejecting the generalizability of many of the standard behavioral taxonomies developed within this research and explored in Chapter 2. While the study validates the existence of toxic behaviors, it problematizes identifying them in the abstract and outside of the relational significance of the parties involved. Additionally, the study validated the role of power in TWB but problematized whether power can be understood by anyone outside of the relative importance that individuals placed on the relationship.

While Beugre (1998) and these participants made no distinction between the impact of both forms of TWB, the formal mechanisms designed to address counterproductive behavior do distinguish them. Institutional controls are designed for transparent, provable allegations and to address them in such a way that the risk to the agency is minimized, if not eliminated. Conflict management and mediation as stopgaps were also inadequate when the source of the behavior was sociodemographic marginalization, and thus, existential for the target. Finally, the study revealed a fundamental disconnect between what participants expected from these regulatory frameworks and what they were bound to provide.

> I went to EEO, and then when I still got no relief, and when an attorney is telling me some craziness. I mean, I just didn't know what to do. (Eve)

In his earlier works, Strauss (1969) separated the external rule-driven interactions between institutions and the claiming and reclaiming interactions between less formal personal interactions. These findings suggest an institutional-individual third frame in which the person

became subsumed by procedures designed to address TWB and other counterproductive behaviors through regulatory frameworks or litigation around provable action. Passive behaviors could only be addressed through prevention or alternative means that were designed for more mundane operational conflicts. Intelligence officers were expected to use procedures, rules, and structures not designed for them, their problems, or to provide solutions that were anti-institutional.

Future Research for Proposition 1

The conditions catalyzing TWB examined in Chapter 4 serve as a foundation to design a large-scale study to understand the nature of TWB in each entity and the IC, overall. What behaviors are more prevalent? What are their impacts? Are segments of the IC more prone to TWB than others? Are certain response patterns more commonly associated with specific behaviors? Alternatively, are the complex individual and situational dynamics identified in this study replicated on a wider scale?

Research might indicate that TWB was not a significant challenge for the IC. If so, how might those findings inform other critical mission environments attempting to address the phenomenon? Alternatively, are segments of the IC less prone to toxic dynamics than others and why? For segments of the IC that have successfully addressed toxic behaviors, what mechanisms did they use?

Balancing competing interests is inherent in leadership. However, individual dissent that emerges into collective action can change norms (Fairhurst & Zoller, 2010). Like the intelligence officers who exercised their own sets of values, acumen, and agency to maneuver around TWB, actors within Compliance Five exercised similar decision frameworks to encourage intelligence officers to avoid redress. These sites of dissent formed loci of tempered radicalism (Meyerson, 2001) to protect the employee even if the institution also benefited from the choice not to file. These revelations occurred so often during data collection that they began to resemble informal structures for action. What implications does this “everyday” tempered radicalism raise about

the overall health and effectiveness of the IC's ability to address TWB and other forms of counterproductive behavior? What actions might IC entities take to formalize dissenting actions into more proactive structures to address passive TWB? Simply, what possibilities for crafting meaningful solutions to TWB as a collective might be overlooked because actors within the Compliance Five feel compelled to maneuver around the norms of their own social world?

> ***Proposition 2: Intelligence officers whose self-concepts are highly integrated and do not need significant external validation for those self-concepts to remain stable will respond more effectively to TWB in support of the mission.***

As of this writing, this study is the first to link dimensions for response to TWB as processes for *Holding Self* in support of the mission. When responding to TWB, they defined self-concepts by framing who they were, who they perceived the toxic personality and others in the environment thought they were, and what they wanted others to see. Then, they constructed longitudinal response patterns to hold onto those self-concepts. *Holding Self* processes among intelligence officers aligned with three theoretical constructs:

Reflexive Self

A significant body of literature links satisfaction of the "self" to goal attainment. Responding to TWB for intelligence officers began by ascribing meaning to those events in interaction with who they believed they were. This social process created self-concepts that were socially constructed (Blumer, 1969; Mead, 1934)—that is, compilations of internal and external re-framings of "self." In expanding Blumer's symbolic interaction theory to practice, Snow (2001) argued that self-concepts could not be understood outside of the "web of relationships" (p. 369). Thus, in the relationally significant and ambiguous IC, self-concepts were not only created within this web. The web conveyed a reason for that self-concept to exist.

The selective way in which intelligence officers decided which relationships were useful in sustaining self-concepts challenged *Holding Self* processes. Simply, reflected appraisals partially form our self-concepts; however, some reflected appraisals are more useful than others

because the appraisal process either supports some aspect of who we want to be or some aspect of the "self" we fear we are (Cooley, 1902). An appraisal that fits neither framework will be rejected. Further, the former supports self-concepts in healthy ways, while the later inhibits healthy self-images. Additionally, social network theory links this appraisal process to cognitive work related to positions taken related to an ideal "self" (N. E. Friedkin, 2011; Noah E. Friedkin & Johnsen, 2011). Therefore, intelligence officer self-concepts that remained stable and non-reliant on external validation in toxic events responded in ways healthier for themselves and the mission.

Dana and Maria were unaffected by toxic peers because relationships with prized mentors helped develop self-concepts as intelligence officers, lessons they relied upon throughout their careers. However, when Dana's toxic supervisor marginalized her from participating in her perceived area of expertise, this rejection of her self-concept as the expert in field triggered efforts to hold onto that self-concept. Others witnessing her treatment intensified the impact and increased her desire to reassert her "self." Similarly, Maria's self-concept as an African American woman of power and accomplishment became challenged through the reflections of young, female, African American mentees as they struggled against similar toxic behaviors to those that Maria had once devalued. Consequently, intelligence officers calibrated the relational significance of the toxic personality, but also, witnesses.

Holding onto self-concepts is a relatively abstract process of claiming the "self." However, the process also plays an ordering function so that we know how we intersect with the others, what they can expect from us, and what we can expect from ourselves. This process also intersected with a related aspect of the "self": what they wanted.

Self Determination Theory

During the grounded theory interviews, intelligence officers explored the goals they had in their toxic experiences, which became indistinguishable from their goals in participating in this study. Loess, an analyst, wanted to produce—a lot—and be unencumbered by toxic supervisors

and coworkers; he also wanted me to know his successes in maneuvering around the behavior. Aedan, who functioned within physically dangerous environments, wanted to fulfill the mission with no loss of life; he also wanted me to know that he had successfully managed toxic dynamics. Natalie wanted to live her lifelong dream of serving in the intelligence community; she also wanted me to know how TWB destroyed that dream. Eve and Margaret, still recovering from their experiences, wanted respect in their workplaces and from me. Mike wanted the opportunity to grow his career equally to his Caucasian counterparts and for me to know that this effort was ongoing. By claiming these goals, they also revealed aspects of the "self."

Self-determination theory differentiates between goal attainment and the "self" (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2000). Within this theory, intelligence officers activated their innate psychological needs to shape motivation around expected rewards. Desired rewards might have been external (e.g., financial), introjected (e.g., self-esteem), identified (e.g., response patterns chosen for their intrinsic nature), or integrated (e.g., responses consistent with how one behaves as a father or friend in a holistic self-concept). Responses were framed as authentic reflections of the "self" (Kernis, 2003) and autonomous (freely chosen; Ryan & Deci, 2006).

Empirical research has linked intrinsic and integrated goals, authentic responses, and stable self-concepts (Sheldon & Kasser, 1995). Alternatively, adopting responses under duress—such as the withdrawal processes in "Folding In" or the unproductive forcing processes in "Reinforcing Style"—either diminished the "self" or reframed it as incongruent with the workplace (Ryan & Deci, 2006). This study demonstrated that those who departed the organization (or, the IC) to escape the dynamic also described "self-concepts" more resistant to the destructive impacts from TWB.

Values as "Believed Selves"

Social identity theory argues that human beings hold multiple identities that emerge contextually as a set of values. Within groups, multiple identities converge tacitly as a set of values related to what aligns and what does not (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Values may be more

salient in some contexts than others and force group members to choose among them. Therefore, within-group values can play a synergistic role or be a source of conflict (Ellemers et al., 2002; Ellemers & Rink, 2005). Findings in Chapter 4 demonstrated the role that values played in forming "believed selves." Simply, when intelligence officers did not require others in the environment to share or acknowledge their personal values, those "believed selves" formed critical aspects of stable self-concepts that became less vulnerable to challenges from toxic environments. However, Chapter 5 showed that the Archetype's institutional-level culture-shaping may not manifest into meaningful solutions when its repertoires diverge from those in other social worlds and in practice.

Future Research for Proposition 2

While the IC has an interest in establishing norms and standards to prevent TWB, it also has an incentive to ensure that intelligence officers adopt productive responses to the behavior when it emerges and before the dynamic impacts the institution. Chapter 4 demonstrated that the most effective responses emerged from a complex mix of cunning and personal values. Values bounded both the participant's own behavior and what they were tolerate from others.

One question the IC might consider is the overall cost in time and effort in managing TWB and responses to it among those whose values do not align with the Archetype cultural ideal. Simply, should IC resources be targeted at attempting to reshape values frameworks among its personnel or invest in identifying possible recruits already in alignment? Research demonstrates that hiring for values rather than trying to realign values post-recruitment is more efficient to support missions (Gully et al., 2013; Patterson et al., 2016). While the IC's efforts to embed an ideal culture from the institutional frame is laudable, something can be said for solidifying those values at the practice level in early recruitment practices to drive them upward. How might the IC evaluate its recruitment practices to emphasize hiring for values "fit" pre-recruitment to minimize the need for cultural realignment after misaligned values have created a toxic environment? Intelligence officers commonly referenced late-career senior

analysts and team leads as contravening IC cultural change goals. What are the impacts of so-called “lifetime hire” cultures, practice-level norms, and tacit structures on the IC’s culture-shaping efforts if valued personnel do not support those efforts?

Crafting these changes at the macro-level requires an acknowledgment that some entities may benefit from tailored approaches incompatible with the challenges that other IC institutions are experiencing. Values misalignments at the micro-political level emerged in their most extreme form in regional entities away from the IC center. In these locations, personnel commonly were constructed as being “homegrown” in those local areas, having remained in positions for longer periods of time than typical in the fluid IC environment, and in the clash of values referenced above, chose antiquated norms rejecting cultural diversity over IC norms promoting them. Micro-institutions either supported this framework directly or merely enabled it through inaction. What specialized challenges may the IC confront in reshaping cultures in this complex array of micro-organizations? What norms in practice support IC cultural goals and which norms conflict? Which micro-institutional mechanisms function as supports to these ideals, and which ones function as impediments?

Proposition 3: Intelligence officers with an awareness of personal power (agency) and superior organizational acumen (political skill) will respond to TWB more effectively in support of the mission.

The findings in Chapter 4 demonstrated a link between organizational acumen (political skill), agency, and the effectiveness of response. Simply, participants who maneuvered pathways to engage networks, knowledge of culture and practices, and awareness of power so that personal and mission interests aligned responded with less disruption to their support to the mission. This dynamic combined two theoretical constructs critical to managing operations within complex organizations: agency and political skill (organizational acumen). While these two constructs are separate, scholarship and this study link them in a symbiotic relationship—to have one requires ownership of the other. The following section will discuss them as separate constructs but within a combined conceptualization.

Agency

Giddens (1991) defined agency as an expression of one's will onto the environment. In this framework, agency is not only an awareness of goals but the willingness to act on them. "Agency" and "acting" are separate in that actors are governed by rules while agents execute power (Karp, 1986). Emirbayer and Mische (1998) argued that agency is a social engagement in which experience and present capacity enable an imagined future. Thus, agentic response to TWB required identifying the "self" in the situation.

Knowing the "self" also requires being able to use it as an influencing factor. Intelligence officers' use of voice and opportunities for action reflected their sense of agency. I use the phrase *sense agency* because assessing power requires cognitive work around sensemaking for what is happening in the environment; who other agents and actors are who can help or hinder one's goals (Creed et al., 2019; Weick, 1995); what is one's power to influence the sensemaking of others; and act (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991). In this way, agency required understanding the "self" in combination with goals, available resources, and limitations.

In his structuration theory, Giddens (1991) also argued that the same complexities that allowed organizations to grow also restrained them. The effectiveness of response formed around perceptions of boundaries as inhibiting or merely informative. Intelligence officers functioning within "Seeking Subliminal" found boundaries to be guardrails for safe action and less as restraints. They either maneuvered to shift the boundaries or left. Intelligence officers within "Folding In" and "Reinforcing Style" only perceived restraint. Within "Folding In," those restraints froze intelligence officers in time and space. Within "Reinforcing Style," they fought against those restraints; however, unrealistic expectations for the ability to affect their environments contributed to unproductive response patterns.

Organizational Acumen/Political Skill

Agency is fundamentally about action. A tenet of social network theory is that one must first understand the positions of oneself and others to influence the environment (Balkundi &

Kilduff, 2006). By extension, organizational acumen requires a sense of governance, key processes, direct and tacit decision-making processes, and culture (Morton, 2015). However, organizational acumen—like its symbiotic partner of power—is temporal and situational (Tsoukas & Vladimirou, 2001). As power shifts, organizational acumen may emerge in complementary or divergent ways. Intelligence officers who responded most effectively to TWB sensed the difference.

I have chosen to frame these traits as organizational acumen rather than *political skill* to avoid misinterpretation of what the term means in context. Partisan political considerations are incompatible with the intelligence environment. Additionally, the polarized political environment in which this study has been published could lead to further misinterpretation. However, a significant body of literature conceptualizes and measures organizational acumen within the construct of political skill in ways that this study validated.

Political in this context is defined as an arena for action, sizing up, and making choices (Mintzberg, 1985) necessary to influence others toward a set of goals (Perrewe et al., 2004; J. Pfeffer, 1981). Findings in this study validated the research related to acumen in other contexts. Although awareness of agency also played a role, intelligence officers who leveraged superior acumen reported stabilized self-concepts that enabled them to confront toxic circumstances with more agility, personal acceptance, and a sense of peace:

> I've come to terms with that now. It's the beast that is working in [issue redacted], especially working across different agencies and across different mission sets and across different career tracks. In the greater scope of things, I know that these are things that happen. And, I don't think if I had pushed back more it would have changed. (Maria)

The findings validated Perrewe et al.'s (2004) conclusions that political skill effectively buffered physical and psychological stress from TWB . Gwen’s (2020) argument that she had the power to hold her toxic personality accountable but not the certainty that her career could survive the scrutiny validated Treadway's (2018) findings that effective response required both political skill and agency. Finally, Ben’s (2020) and Loess’ (2020) effective use of networks in their response

choices validated the socially constructed way in which agency and skill emerge through social networks (Kilduff & Tsai, 2003).

The *Pathway Model of Holding Self* conceptualizes the problematized environment for choosing how to respond effectively to TWB in the intelligence environment. They transitioned through assessments of power vis-à-vis the toxic personality (agency). They also had to choose the most effective response within an environment in which status was fluid, ambiguous, and elastic across multiple actors in the environment (organizational acumen). To return to Balkundi and Kilduff (2006), power was not only in the relationship but in awareness of what that relationship was, its placement in the situation, and how others perceived the dynamic differently.

Future Research for Proposition 3

Organizational acumen, agency, and their roles in managing relationships effectively suggest opportunities for the IC to understand how they impact response to TWB. Organizational acumen is more critical on a broader level than simply in how to respond to TWB. The IC's embeddedness in an uncertain global environment expands the need for organizational acumen to understand how to leverage entities during challenging times (Denis et al., 2010; Morgan, 2005). What builds these skills at various levels of the workforce? Y. Liu et al. (2007) found relationships between affability and political skill. However, research also shows that TWB is less related to personality traits than perspectives on power (Kusy & Holloway, 2009; Pearson & Porath, 2005; Yamada, 2000). Therefore, what mitigating skills redirect organizational acumen and agency toward positive goal orientations?

These interrelationships also raise questions about where the "self" ends and where the institution begins. How might one measure these dynamics? How do intelligence officers recognize them? Because agency, acumen, and self-concepts intersected with relational assessments in the study, how do intelligence officers assess them as resources? Relating is a longitudinal and ambiguous process in the IC as structures designed to build systemic flexibility

often bring toxic personalities and targets back together so that positions may be different but old resentments remain. What factors contribute to relationship building in the IC? How might agency and organizational acumen be identified in recruits to build a cadre of intelligence officers who seek the subliminal rather than fold in or reinforce unproductive styles?

> ***Proposition 4: Intelligence officers with healthy mentoring networks that steward them over time will respond more effectively to TWB in support of the mission.***

In a 2011 essay, leadership theorist Marco Tavanti argued that the first step in challenging a toxic leader was a conversation with a coach or mentor. This study supported his argument in that intelligence officers who had meaningful mentoring networks typically responded in ways that supported self-concepts and sustained their contributions to the mission. However, mentors played longitudinal and multiplicative roles. This section reviews mentoring by reviewing relevant theory and research, along with the significance of these findings in the intelligence context. I could identify no other research on the nature and function of mentorship in the IC. Consequently, this research is the first to examine the relationship of mentoring to any dynamic within IC operations.

Mentors as Stewards

Kusy and Holloway (2009) argued that effective mentoring enables mentees to understand themselves in relationship to others. Consequently, a sense of “self” plays an integral role for both mentor and mentee. Additional research in non-IC settings has identified relationships between positive mentoring experiences and increased career growth, job satisfaction, socialization (Chao, 1997), productivity, self-efficacy (Paglis et al., 2006), and career longevity (Higgins & Thomas, 2001). Research has (not surprisingly) also found relationships between mentoring networks, learning cultures, and increased organizational performance (Škerlavaj et al., 2007). Therefore, mentors play a holistic stewardship role in advising mentees on how to protect effort, capabilities, growth, and choices (Resnik, 2019).

Early theoretical modeling and research by Kram (1983, 1988) identified an arc for mentoring across four phases: the initiation phase when the relationship begins; the cultivation phase as the mentor and mentee learn about others' capabilities; the separation phase as the mentee becomes more independent from the mentor; and the redefinition phase in which the mentor and mentee relationship terminates, ushering in a new phase to their relationship as peers. The critical aspect of each phase is the relational shape of the dyad; information and tradecraft are transferred, but so are norms, trust, and comity. Chao (1997) found that the most impactful period was the cultivation phase in which the psychosocial impact of the mentor onto the mentee was most intense. Additionally, Wanberg et al. (2006) found that this psychosocial, cultivation phase was a critical juncture in which mentees learned how to manage relationships, function within the larger organizational context, and grow their careers.

This study validated the importance of positive mentoring relationships in building self-concepts as valuable contributors to the mission, as well as playing educational, advisory, psychosocial, relational, and modeling roles. However, this study was the first to theorize these relationships as integral to the intelligence mission. More critically, the study was also the first to identify a relationship between early mentoring experiences, ongoing relationships with mentors, and longitudinal responses to TWB. Maria (2020), an African American woman, talked at length about the positive role that her older, Caucasian male mentors played in her self-concept as a valued intelligence officer. This validation by "white men in power" overshadowed early fears that she would be marginalized. Similarly, Dana (2020), a Caucasian, female intelligence officer, explored the role that mentors played in building a sense of self-efficacy that minimized the impacts from toxic peers as her career progressed. Ben (2020), an African-American male, perceived that a long-term mentoring relationship with his entity's director benefited from the mutual influence between both the mentor and mentee.

The study diverged from the Kram (1983, 1988) model on mentorship phases in an important respect: for the intelligence officers in this study, these relationships never entered the

redefinition phase. While the relationships evolved longitudinally to remove the status difference between intelligence officers and their mentors, these mentors sustained their mentorship roles over time:

> I will say that I had some pretty awesome mentors that would literally take my call any day or any time of day or night to listen to me [just] trying to make sense of this person's behaviors. (Christina)

While an exact conclusion is undetermined, this sustained relationship may be related to the relational ambiguity discourse and related "situational peer" repertoire that emerged in the study. The study found that relational status between intelligence officers and other early relationships remained relatively stable over time. Mentors as titular superiors early in the relationship sustained a longitudinal advisory role, even as the status between them became more peer-related.

The role of "trust" in this study also emerged as a link to Kram's (1983, 1988) research. He found that the cultivation phase identified a psychosocial role for mentors in which trust deepens. In the sensemaking role that Christina (2020) ascribed to her mentor, a sense of trust likely would have been required for her to value the advice she received. In the relationally significant IC, extreme contexts lend an outsized impact to low-probability events (Hannah et al., 2009; Hastie, 2011). Consequently, the quasi-leadership role that mentors play (Godshalk & Sosik, 2007) might have elevated the significance of trust so that Christina and her mentor found mutually beneficial reasons for sustaining the mentor-mentee relationship.

Who Mentors Whom?

The relationship of mentoring to effective response to TWB also surfaced in relation to potential impacts on the IC's diversity and inclusion goals discussed in Chapter 5. Specifically, intelligence officers surfaced perceived impacts from the low availability of ethnic and gender minority mentors. They also discussed whether having mentors of the same gender or ethnic group was significant.

The extant research on same-cultural/cross-cultural debate is mixed. In a study of Caucasian and African American children, Oyserman et al. (1995) found that achievement among African American students relied heavily on the imagining of possible “selves,” particularly among males. Consequently, a possible assumption would be that mentors who understood the unique circumstances and experiences of mentees would be most beneficial. Similarly, Burt (2009) argued that women and ethnic minorities are at a disadvantage for mentoring relationships in the private sector because of the intense relational aspects of mentoring in male-dominated organizational structures. This research might align with the experiences of intelligence officers in the male-dominated IC. Alternatively, research involving doctoral students at U.S. universities found that African American students identified the greatest impact from advisors who showed a genuine interest in their research, regardless of that advisor’s sociodemographic identity (Felder, 2010).

The findings in this study also were mixed. Gwen (2020), a Caucasian female, explored the ironic impact that having so few female senior leaders as mentors at her IC entity was having on the institution’s ability to prepare female middle managers for promotions to the senior ranks. Jason, a situational analysis participant, who shared experiences with TWB, recalled being a junior, African American analyst struggling to win the attention of potential Caucasian mentors. However, as already noted, Maria partially ascribed her success in managing TWB to her Caucasian male mentors. Another African American female participant in the situational analysis segment, Vickie identified significantly positive experiences with a Caucasian male mentor who she originally resisted because he was from a different sociodemographic group.

The availability of cross-cultural mentoring in the IC has been linked to broader issues of diversity and inclusion. In Congressional testimony, the ODNI’s Equal Opportunity Director, Rita Sampson (2019), argued for more formal and cross-cultural mentoring programs in the IC to boost better career development, promotion opportunities, and retention among employees

within marginalized groups. However, research suggests that formal mentoring programs may yield less positive results than informal programs that are relationally driven (Eby & Allen, 2002; Ragins et al., 2000). Alternatively, in Vickie's example from the previous paragraph, that positive mentoring relationship with a Caucasian male was formally assigned, not chosen. The integration between these perspectives may lie in Jason's reflections on the importance of intelligence officers having different mentors who fill different mentoring needs.

The distinction between these various findings may relate to why individuals mentor. Research indicates that mentor proactivity—in other words, mentors who seek opportunities to mentor—is related to positive mentoring results (Wanberg et al., 2006). Additionally, compatibility of learning orientations between mentors and mentees have been linked to more positive outcomes (Egan, 2005; B. Ragins et al., 2000). Mentors who found those relationships rewarding in their own rights were more willing to mentor in the future (Eby et al., 2006). The longitudinal role that IC mentors played in this theoretical model raises the significance of creating the mechanisms for positive mentoring opportunities that mutually reinforce.

Future Research for Proposition 4

The positive and longitudinal role that mentorship played in responding to TWB would seem to support a formal mentoring concept. However, research cited above would also suggest the importance of ensuring that mentors are willing participants in such a program and that participate for prosocial reasons. How do intelligence officers choose mentors and for what reasons? Are there benefits to hybrid forms that encourage formal and informal mentoring networks? How might career development include incentives to mentor and accept mentoring? How might the IC play a gate-keeping role so that those choosing to mentor are good stewards of the culture-shaping ideal and can foster effective approaches to TWB? How do tendencies toward higher organizational acumen and agency relate to efforts to build mentoring networks?

Mentoring relationships and networks played complex roles among African American participants of both genders. References to minority "co-signing" formed mechanisms for

sponsorship that transcended ordinary professional networks and mentoring relationships. These sponsorships emerged as resources for ethnic minority intelligence officers to increase collective strength during toxic events, as well “vouchers” to boost careers. Alternatively, female intelligence officers in this study referenced fewer such resources. When they had them, they were more likely to fear betrayal or embarrassment at using them. What are the sources of these distinctions? What might Caucasian females learn from the experiences of their African-American female counterparts about how to safely nurture and leverage co-signing opportunities?

> ***Proposition 5: Solutions for TWB designed around better training for managers without equal focus on the role of referential power, relational significance, and relational ambiguity will fall short of IC goals.***

Archetype discourse centered on middle managers as critical junction points for addressing TWB. During the situational analysis segment of the study, actors normally functioning with the Compliance Five also adopted this repertoire as a mitigator for the more interpretive toxic behaviors that legal and regulatory remedies were not designed to address. The also adopted the repertoire in relation to the importance of culture-shaping as a preventative measure to avoid redress shortcomings. In this refrain, discourse referenced middle management training programs to enhance empathy and broader levels of emotional intelligence. However, as shown in the *Pathway Model of Holding Self,* this discursive field diverged from Core, which framed managers as reflective of the seniors they represented. Seniors were implicated as parallel problems and solutions. Most critically, Core discourse elevated relational ambiguities related to tacit forms of power outside of hierarchy as equal partners to formal power.

Emotional Intelligence

Middle managers emerged as critical junction points for culture-shaping and standard-setting in the study. These efforts centered on enhanced training, with an emphasis on increasing emotional intelligence (EI) for middle managers (Coats et al., 2019; *Joint Strategy*,

2020). EI “refers to the ability to process emotion-laden information competently and to use it to guide cognitive activities like problem-solving and to focus energy on required behaviors’’ (Salovey et al., 2001, p. 159). While many practice-based theorists have embraced EI to improve individual and organizational performance, theoretical models and empirical research vary in usability and rigor (McCleskey, 2014).

I have identified no research related to EI in the IC or that substantiates a benefit to the IC mission. This study cannot evaluate the methodological validity of the IC’s emphasis on EI for middle managers as a response to counterproductive workplace behavior in general, nor specifically TWB. However, research on the relationship between EI and performance in other settings is mixed. Data supports a positive link between EI and influencing goals and objectives, instilling employee enthusiasm, organizational identity building (George, 2000), as well as benefiting task and relationship-oriented leadership (Wirawan et al., 2019). Particularly relevant to the relationally ambiguous IC, research has found relationships between EI and emergent leadership behaviors among those outside of formal hierarchy. However, benefits may accrue more to the organization and have benign effects on the employee (Côté et al., 2010; Côté & Miners, 2006). Kilduff et al. (2010) cautioned that skills differ from intent, so that EI skills absent organizationally positive goals may promote personal interests over that of the organization. Further, a case analysis of one private sector organization found that whether someone rates highly on EI may depend on who is rating them; peers and supervisors typically rate EI skills more highly than subordinates (Cavallo & Brienza, 2002).

Intelligence officers likely would applaud efforts to build relational skills among middle managers. However, the data in this study suggest that they would reject a singular focus on middle management without a complementary focus on senior leadership and ineffective redress. Also, increased EI skills only become relevant when managers can use them to solve problems. Participants varied in their choices to engage managers as well as senior leaders when they experienced toxic environments. For those who did, the feedback they received also

varied from positive action to hostility to indifference. How participants responded typically weighed on complex considerations of likely success versus anticipated impacts. Even asking for help carried risk in which higher levels of EI on the part of managers would not address.

Relational Significance and Relational Ambiguity

Participants reflected a complex array of power sources in the IC. Senior leaders and managers held formal power. Senior analysts and team leads held referential forms (French & Raven, 1959; Raven, 1964) bestowed by perceived expertise (power over knowledge), renown (how extended their networks were), and reputation (how extended networks perceived their power). Senior analysts and team-leads used control over account assignments, mentoring, and tradecraft to benefit some over others. Quasi-formal power over travel, production, briefing opportunities, and specialized clearances expanded their reach in ways that often usurped formal leaders.

The study validated prior research on behavioral taxonomies and the ways that perceived power differentials influenced how intelligence officers responded (Kusy & Holloway, 2009; Pelletier, 2010, 2012; K. R. Williams, 2018). Additionally, Kusy and Holloway's (2009) "power protector" model played a significant part. For example, Ben and Liam treaded softly with toxic subordinates who had special favoritism relationships with more senior leaders. Christina examined the way in which a non-senior colleague's functional role in working with senior leaders elevated him to informal senior status; in turn, challenging his toxic behavior became too risky. Therefore, how to respond relied not only on expected reactions from the toxic personality, but also on how one expected powerful "others" to react.

This study identified a nuance not available in prior research, however. As noted in Proposition 1, "toxic personalities" were not defined by a context-neutral set of behaviors. Rather, behaviors were evaluated as toxic or non-toxic depending on who the personality was to the target. For example, Dana perceived behaviors by her supervisor (formal power) as toxic; those same behaviors by colleagues and peers were benign jealousy. Jason perceived little

impact when supervisors (formal power) engaged in behaviors typically considered to be toxic; those same behaviors in teammates felt like a betrayal. Power differentials remained within the calculation for response. However, power emerged from what the participant expected, wanted, and needed from that individual. Simply, the power was vested in the relational dynamic as a third entity in the relationship that diminished the relevance of more transparent forms of power attached to the individuals.

The study identified a second nuance not addressed by prior research: the relationally ambiguous nature of power in the IC so that the influence of position was diluted by interactions of the "self" and others in relation fluidity. Simply, power differentials depended on context and time, but not in linear ways. A supervisor might be perceived as a peer if they were "in charge" but did not "outrank" the participant (Gwen). An intelligence officer might have responsibility for the mission but not the people executing it (Joel). Toxic team leads might one day become subordinates (Zeke). Senior leaders might have limited power over subordinates who use special clearances and relationships to control information (Liam). The one constant is the memory of the experience because TWB freezes relationships, even as intelligence officers enter, exit, and reenter each other's lives (Kelly).

Future Research for Proposition 5

Relational ambiguity and significance ran like a current through the study. They emerged in discussions on the importance of mentoring, their power in framing toxicity, and perceptions of agency. They also made boundaries between formal and informal power more porous. However, IC scholarship is silent on the role of relationships even in their most basic form, much less more complex discussions around how they are interpretive constituted, maintained, and passively emergent. The IC's focus on collaboration without a concomitant understanding of the complexities of relationships is tantamount to having an interest in high-rise construction without a parallel interest in where to place the nails.

Relational significance and relational ambiguity problematize designing solutions that focus singularly on middle management to address TWB. Formal positions indeed have power through span of control. However, this study showed that behavior becomes toxic when needs surrounding self-concepts become threatened. This risk emerged within both formal and informal power relationships. How do relational significance and relational ambiguity intersect? What might an organizational ethnographic study tell us about how they emerge and function in practice? How might these frameworks differ in routine versus crisis environments? How might one measure relational significance and relational ambiguity? In what contexts might their impacts as conditions of response to TWB vary? How might IC managers and senior leaders moderate the impact of these frameworks on response?

Research Opportunities in Other Frameworks

Research on TWB within other complex operational environments is robust, including the critical mission environments of health care and military organizations. The units of analysis in the preponderance of this research relates to manifestation and impact. Response is one impact. However, neither variations in those responses nor the influence of complex relational factors have been a significant source of research in those frameworks.

Just as research in other industries informed the research question and the design of this study, these findings may lend some benefit to non-IC industries in which leadership must traverse complex boundaries to manage TWB and other counterproductive workplace behavioral constructs. For example, the role of sustaining self-concepts amid TWB may present additional research avenues for scholarship on team psychology, power in practice, and how various work relationships amass value. Leadership scholars seeking new questions on relational leadership might find value in the implications within the relational ambiguity concept. Organizational psychologists specializing in public institutional frameworks might also find value in understanding how these ambiguities intersect with alignments and misalignments at the organizational messaging level.

Implications for Leading Change

In Chapter 1, I explained my rationale for conducting this study. I do not argue that TWB within the IC is less or more problematic than in other industries. No research has explored this question. Rather, I chose the topic because the lack of research on TWB in the intelligence framework was anomalous in comparison to other critical mission industries. Because my interest is in leading and change as a psychological process, I chose a topic that would enable me to understand the sociopsychology of response. This analysis has added to the understanding of the systemic dynamic constitutive of TWB in the IC and the situatedness of behavioral evaluation. The study also surfaced critical divergences and contradictions within the social environment that may negatively impact the IC's ability to lead the change efforts that will address TWB.

The model developed within this study illustrates the longitudinal trajectory of response, but also the lack of linearity to the process. Responses tend to be emergent but within a framework in which individual meaning around otherwise innocuous terms like "peer" and "rank" challenge definitions outside of the personal experiences of those involved. These complexities challenge benign notions of leadership aligned to title and role (Bennis, 1994; Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Ford & Harding, 2007) in favor of models that embrace leading as influence transcending formal hierarchy (Bolden et al., 2008; Lukes, 2005). Consequently, senior leaders may reflect a category of employment in the IC but not leadership in practice.

The interaction between formal and referential status in the IC are more representative of distributed (Gronn, 2002) or shared leadership theories in which all team members are engaged in leading within their sphere of influence (Pearce, 2004; Pearce & Sims, 2002). Thus, leadership reflects less a singular role and more of an accumulation of parts into a hybrid social whole (Gronn, 2011). Research indicates that perceptions of empowerment (Wood, 2005), the team environment, and the availability of external coaching (Carson et al., 2007) correlate to success in shared leadership paradigms. Notably, rather than proactive empowerment, shared

leadership models in the IC may reflect size and context-driven limitations on the span of control over mission by designated senior leaders. In this manner, leadership emergence (D'Innocenzo et al., 2016) is minimized by TWB's voice-stripping impact, which undermines the collaborative flexibility needed to foster the IC mission.

Organizational structures settle institutions into organizational scripts (Barley & Tolbert, 1997). Scripts become heuristics that become tacit and resistant to challenge, even when they no longer meet organizational needs. Institutional leaders may anchor to rigid, misaligned patterns that actually inhibit change (Kegan & Lahey, 2009). In his adaptive leadership theory, Harvard psychiatrist and leadership theorist, Ron Heifetz (2006; Heifetz et al., 2009), argued that a primary reason that organizations fail is that they apply technical solutions (e.g., new training programs) to problems that require adaptation in fundamental values, cultures, norms, and structures. This organizational misfire typically emerges from top-down solutions that do not reflect the perspectives of those experiencing the problem, and thus, lose fidelity to what the problem is in practice. To be truly adaptive toward addressing the problem in practice, solutions must be developed by the intelligence officers experiencing the problem rather than driven from the institutional level.

Findings in this study related to the significance of the relationship to decisions about what constitutes TWB and relational ambiguity as a Core repertoire. These challenges will likely grow as the IC continues to integrate and its complex array of micro- and meso-cultures interact to create new conditions for TWB if not managed appropriately. A practice-based perspective on leadership as a social influence process (Uhl-Bien, 2006), enacted through partnerships (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995) and a trifecta of enabling, administering, and adapting leadership forms (Lichtenstein et al., 2006; Marion & Uhl-Bien, 2001; Uhl-Bien & Arena, 2017; Uhl-Bien & Marion, 2009) would be optimal for the adaptive challenges confronting the IC.

The application of technical solutions to adaptive problems in the IC emerged in two elements of the study. First, institutional-level leaders obligate intelligence officers at all levels to

report incidences of TWB to management teams and the appropriate redress organizations (Coats et al., 2019; *ICD 651*, 2019; *Joint Strategy*, 2020). However, this study demonstrated the misalignment between the design and intent behind redress processes and more interpretive forms of the behavior and its impacts. Sites of dissent emerged among Compliance Five personnel to dissuade targets from utilizing those "high-bar" frameworks rather than relying on processes designed to help the entity and not them. While laudable in their goals to obligate intelligence officers to use them, the boundaries around these processes nevertheless confine them to a narrow set of the problem and prevent change.

Secondly, this study identified commitments at the institutional level toward enhancing EI training and accountability for managers (*Joint Strategy,* 2020). Fitzgerald (1992) delineated between training and development according to orientation toward present skills (training), and future growth and enrichment (development). Improved EI skills may provide a technical improvement for less relationally oriented managers. However, that approach likely will not address the experiences referenced in this study in relation to non-supervisory/high-referential status toxic personalities. This approach may be particularly weak when those with referential status believe they are acting according to senior leadership models and prerogatives. The dynamics contributing to ineffective response patterns may not change because intelligence officers in this study cast a wide net of responsibility for unaddressed TWB to the toxic personality and senior leaders, even when the latter were not directly implicated in the events. Consequently, while culture-shaping focused on a mission ideal, Core actors idealized senior leaders, not as individuals, but as a construct for blame that outweighed the managers closely tied to the toxic environment.

Even though the leadership construct was idealized, the perception of the "club" atmosphere surrounding senior leadership referenced in the study may also be an inhibitor to adaptive change. An example from this study is anecdotal but illustrative. Sub-senior intelligence officers functioning within the Core and seniors functioning within the Compliance

Five social worlds readily participated and brought invaluable insights to the findings. However, only one senior leader more aligned with the Archetype social world agreed to participate. In fact, most did not respond to my inquiries. A lack of response negates a firm conclusion about why no response was forthcoming. However, these silences may validate observations in this study about the perceived resistance among senior leaders to address TWB—an uncomfortable subject in any environment— when solutions may disrupt the "club."

One long-term remedy may be in the emerging narrative among some current and former IC leaders who are promoting a transition away from senior-level promotions based on technical expertise in favor of promotions based on superior leadership ability (Long, 2017, 2021). If aligned in institutional structures, processes, and practices (i.e., not merely rhetorical), then this paradigm would likely drive the type of adaptive change that the IC needs by elevating strong leaders who can culture-shape and model behavioral norms. However, just as solutions to TWB must be designed at the level of impact, this "leadership track" to assist those solutions must begin below the management level. Otherwise, middle managers that have been promoted based on technical expertise will bias the selection pool toward those promoted under the old model. Likewise, intelligence officers who may have superior potential as leaders but who are not promoted to middle management due to less technical proficiency will not be considered. While these strong leaders likely would leverage that acumen through shared leadership structures at the practice level, their abilities to influence IC's goals might be blunted.

Limitations of the Study

This study explored how and why intelligence officers responded to TWB in different ways, what conditioned those responses, and how they operationalized into the work of being intelligence officers. The small sample size and qualitative design in this study precludes generalizable conclusions. However, the absence of empirical research on this topic in the IC made a more generalizable study premature because no IC-based theory was developed to

support a design. Therefore, this research was designed to develop such a model to drive future research and actionable measures for the IC.

This study demonstrated that choosing how to respond to TWB was deeply personal, fluid, and situational. The multi-method design using grounded theory methodology and situational analysis was structured to identify how this personal meaning in the situation manifested. Despite this individuality, 20 grounded theory participants from nine IC agencies showed significant alignment of perspective and contributed to a coherent theoretical model much earlier in the data-collection process than expected. Eight primary dimensions of response emerged within a dynamic shaped by self-concepts. *Holding Self* relied upon leveraging networks and acumen to maneuver around the toxic personality and systemic enablers; conflicting and contradicting messaging frameworks between three social worlds about what was available to them and what they should do defined the situation.

The design accomplished its objective to develop a theoretical model as a foundation for future research. As theory grounded in data, findings anchor conclusions in the experiences of the intelligence officers who chose to participate. Consequently, this level of meaning reflected only two sociodemographic groups. LGBTQIA, Latin, and disabled intelligence officers did not participate and leave questions about how their voices might have further shaped the model. Additional studies designed to reflect a wider array of voices would benefit the research by exploring how responses to the behavior manifest more broadly, in which contexts, and the degree of impact to specific mission outcomes.

Time also functioned as a limitation in the situational analysis segment of the study. As noted, I made no effort to provide a thorough map of the complex social worlds within the IC. Rather, I confined mapping processes to those ecological representations relevant to the research question. Even within these design boundaries, that segment of the study was impeded by financial and practical circumstances limiting the time available to peel back proverbial layers within each social world so that I could make these maps more intricate.

Future research might find value in adding depth to this analysis so that these social worlds integral to understanding ecological forces constitutive of how and why intelligence officers respond to TWB in various ways may be further understood.

Conclusion

I began this study with an interest in peer-related TWB but quickly determined that responses to the behavior centered on complex assessments of relational significance, holding onto self-concepts amid longitudinal relational ambiguities, and status. This realization drove a change in my research question and enabled the development of the *Pathways Model of Holding Self* around variations in how intelligence officers respond to TWB. Prior research surfaced the personal meaning associated with how TWB affected individuals and the relational underpinnings of toxic behavior as a systemic phenomenon. This study added to the discussion by establishing questions about whether a toxic personality can ever be called as such when the qualification of behaviors as toxic depends on how significant the relationship is to those affected by the behavior. However, focusing solely on what fosters effective response to TWB does nothing to eliminate the dynamic; for that, one must study the divergent embankments through which the pathways form and find ways to close the gaps. My goal has been to design a map for setting out on that journey by developing a model to support future research.

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Appendix A: Committee Members

Chair

Name: Elizabeth Holloway, Ph.D.
Affiliation: Antioch University
Email: eholloway@antioch.edu

Committee Member

Name: Aqeel Tirmizi, Ph.D.
Affiliation: Antioch University
Email: atirmizi@antioch.edu

External Reader

Name: Jan Goldman, Ed.D.
Affiliation: The Citadel (The Military College of South Carolina)
Email: jgoldma1@citadel.edu

Appendix B: Member Organizations of the U.S. Intelligence Community

Acronym	Agency	Mission
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency	National security intelligence for U.S. policymakers
DIA	Defense Intelligence Agency	Finished military intelligence to warfighters, policymakers, and force-protection planners
DOE	Department of Energy/Office of Intelligence and Counterintelligence	Protects safety and national security around DOE laboratories and plants against foreign intelligence, terrorist, and cyber threats.
DHS	Department of Homeland Security/Office of Intelligence and Analysis	Identifies and assesses threats related to U.S. territory
DOS	Department of Staff/Bureau of Intelligence and Research	Focal point within the agency for finished intelligence on global threats based on all-source, diplomatic reporting
DOT	Department of Treasury/Office of Intelligence Analysis	Analysis and dissemination of foreign intelligence related to the global financial system
DEA	Drug Enforcement Administration/Office of National Security Intelligence	Operational measures and finished intelligence related to illicit drugs and related entities
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation/Intelligence Branch	Oversees intelligence policy and guidance related to national, transnational, and counterintelligence threats
NGA	National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency	Geospatial-intelligence to support civilian and military national security objectives
NRO	National Reconnaissance Office	Designs, builds, and operations nation's reconnaissance satellites in support of operational and finished intelligence
NSA/CSS	National Security Agency/Central Security Service	Performs cryptologic activities to protect U.S. information systems and produce foreign signals intelligence

Appendix B: Member Organizations of the U.S. Intelligence Community (continued)

Acronym	Agency	Mission
ODNI	Office of the Director of National Intelligence	Leads intelligence integration, communication, and planning across 17 IC agencies
USAF ISR	U.S. Air Force Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance	Finished intelligence derived from airborne, space, and cyber sensors.
USA G-2	US Army Intelligence (G-2)	Overall coordination of GEOINT, SIGINT, HUMINT, MASINT, and counterintelligence for the U.S. Army
USCG	U.S. Coast Guard Intelligence	Finished intelligence related to maritime safety, maritime, security, and maritime stewardship to support homeland security
USMC	U.S. Marine Corps	Tactical and operational intelligence in support of battlefield operations
USN	U.S. Naval Intelligence	Provides finished maritime intelligence to policymakers and other stakeholders in support of U.S. naval operations
USSF	U.S. Space Force	Organizes, trains, and equips space forces in order to protect U.S. and allied interests in space and to provide space capabilities to the joint force.

Adapted from *Members of the IC*. (2021, March 11). [Government]. Office of the Director of National Intelligence. https://www.dni.gov/index.php/what-we-do/members-of-the-ic.

Appendix C: Recruitment Letter

Hello –

My name is Greta Creech and I am a Ph.D. candidate within Antioch University's Leadership and Change graduate program. I am conducting research to support my dissertation on how and why members of U.S. intelligence analytic and operational teams respond to toxic workplace behavior among peers, colleagues, and team mates and how these responses operationalize into the work of being intelligence officers.

I am contacting you because your name was provided to me as someone who may have experience in this phenomenon as a government civilian in the intelligence community and because I am hoping you might be willing to support this important research.

For your background information, no identified research has been conducted on this issue in unclassified channels. I am using the Kusy and Holloway (2009) three-pronged model for toxic behavior, which includes (but is not limited to):

- Efforts to shame or embarrass others
- Hostility, including overt (e.g., aggression) or passive (e.g., marginalizing others, silent treatments, etc.) behavior
- Team sabotage, such as hoarding information, engaging in over-surveillance of colleagues or teammates, and demonstrating high levels of distrust

An interview would be conducted and recorded over Zoom conferencing (for transcription purposes, only), using a pseudonym, and only your audio would be maintained. No organizational identifiers or actual participant names would be used.

If you have experiences and insights to share and you meet the criteria set out in the first paragraph, I would enjoy the opportunity to interview you. If you would like to participate or have further questions, please contact me at [redacted]

Thank you.

Greta E. Creech

.

Appendix D: Participant Interview Consent Form

Introduction
I am Greta E. Creech, a Ph.D. candidate enrolled in the Leadership and Change graduate program at Antioch University. Thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to interview you as part of my research. I intend to complete my dissertation on why members of U.S. intelligence community (IC) analytic and operational teams respond in to sustained toxic workplace behavior (TWB) among colleagues and peers and how those responses impact how they function as intelligence officers.

Purpose of the Research
A significant body of literature has explored TWB in other contexts, including other critical mission environments, such as the U.S. military and health care. However, no unclassified research has explored how intelligence officers respond to TWB or how it operationalizes. Because research indicates significantly detrimental impacts to life and safety from TWB in other critical mission environments, the absence of understanding about its impact among colleagues and peers within an operational intelligence environment constitutes an intelligence gap. The goal of the study is to develop a theoretical model to spur further research into the question and assist IC leaders to address the phenomenon.

Participant Selection
You were chosen to participate because you have indicated you have experienced TWB as a civilian government employee while on an analytic or operational team in a U.S. intelligence environment. You should not consent to participate if you do not want your perspectives included in the study's findings.

Project Activities
This consent form involves your participation in a single, one-hour interview over Zoom conferencing. **In keeping with methodological practice and to maintain anonymity, all interviews will be conducted under pseudonym**. You may choose your own pseudonym, or I can select one for you. You will be asked to share experiences with TWB as an analyst or in an intelligence operations environment and how you responded to those behaviors.

Confidentiality
To ensure accuracy, the interview will be recorded. However, as a former intelligence officer, I understand the necessity of ensuring your anonymity and security. If you prefer, the recording can be limited to audio-only. The interview will be professionally transcribed. **Transcribers will have only the audio recording and the interviewee's pseudonym.** If I have follow-up questions post-interview, I will provide those over email for you to answer at your leisure. I, alone, will have access to the stored recording, notes, transcripts, or other documentation stemming from the interview. This data, including any recordings, will be kept in a secure, encrypted location.

I will provide a full, final transcript to you within one week of the interview. **You will have five days to provide corrections or to delete comments you prefer not be included.** If I do not receive a response from you within five days, I will consider the material to be approved for use.

I will automatically strike any reference to a specific organization, program, or initiative that might identify an IC entity or individual.

Voluntary Participation
Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may choose not to participate. You may withdraw at any time. You will not be penalized for your decision not to participate nor for your contributions during study.

Risks
Your experiences will not be included as whole stories. Rather, elements will be fragmented and represented in the study as themes in support of a theoretical model of responses to TWB by U.S. intelligence officers. I do not anticipate that you will be harmed or distressed as a result of participating in this study. However, the subject matter may be uncomfortable and resurface past traumatic events.

Benefits
There will be no direct benefit to you. However, you will play a critical role in developing a theoretical model associated with an under-explored subject as it pertains to the U.S. intelligence community.

Reimbursements
You will not be provided any monetary incentive to take part in this project.

Limits of Privacy Confidentiality
Generally, I will keep confidential any information you request that I keep private. However, there are times where I cannot keep information confidential. I will not be able to maintain confidentiality if I determine that:

- a child or vulnerable adult has been abused
- a person plans to hurt him or herself, such as commit suicide
- a person plans to hurt someone else
- laws governing the use of classified information or national security are or have been violated.

Laws require many professionals to act if they believe a person is at risk for self-harm or are self-harming, harming another, or if a child or adult is being abused. In most states, this information must be provided to the appropriate government agency. Please ask any questions you may have about this issue before agreeing to be in the study. It is important that you do not feel betrayed if I cannot keep information related to these safety requirements private.

Future Publication
I expect your insights to be included in Chapter 4 of my dissertation. However, you will be identified only by pseudonym and insights represented as part of over-arching themes, not as whole stories.

Right to Refuse or Withdraw
You are not required to participate in this study, and you may withdraw from participation at any time.

Who to Contact
If you have any questions at this time or during the project, you may contact me, Greta Creech, at [redacted].

If you have any ethical concerns about this study, please contact Lisa Kreeger, Ph.D., Chair, Institutional Review Board, Antioch University Ph.D. in Leadership and Change, [redacted]

Participant

AGREEMENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY:

I have read the foregoing information, or it has been read to me. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the form. Any questions I have asked were answered to my satisfaction. I consent voluntarily to participate in this project.

Name of Participant _____

Signature of Participant _____

Date _____
Day/month/year

CONSENT TO BE RECORDED AS PART OF THIS STUDY:

I voluntarily agree to be recorded for this study. I agree to allow the use of my recordings only as described in this form.

Yes, video & audio (pseudonym) _____

Yes, audio only (pseudonym) _____

Name of Participant_____

Signature of Participant _____

Date _____
Day/month/year

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Interviewer

I confirm that the participant was given an opportunity to ask questions about the study, and that all of the questions asked by the participant have been answered correctly and to the best of my ability. I confirm that the individual has not been coerced into giving consent, and the consent has been given freely and voluntarily.

A copy of this Informed Consent Form has been provided to the participant.

Name _____

Signature _____

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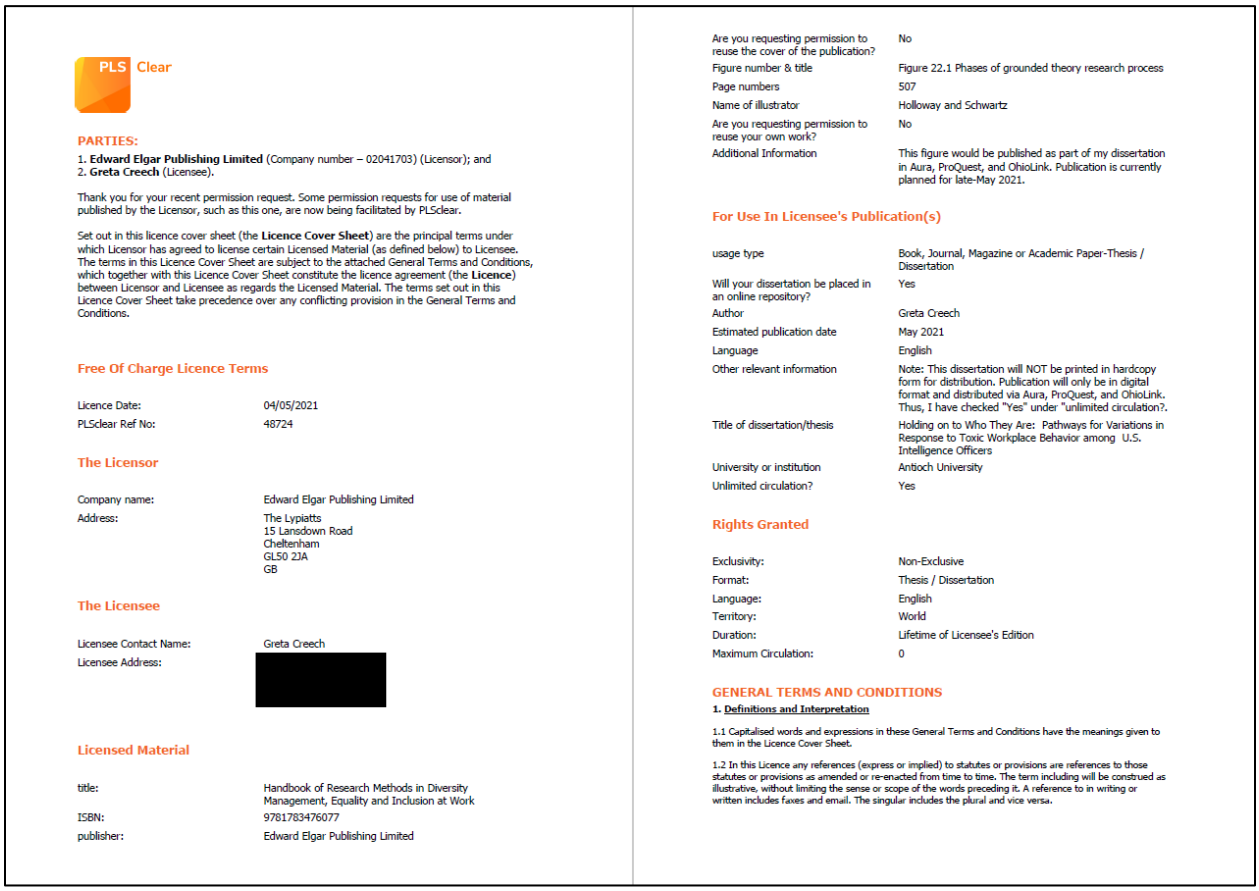

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